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ABSTRACT

The Newspaper Division of the proceedings contains the following 21 papers: "Exploring the Turnover Issue: Why Newspaper Reporters Intend to Quit Their Jobs" (Li-jing Arthur Chang); "Reporters, Robes, and Representative Government" (William Dale Harrison); "Above the Fold: The Implications of Micro-Preservation to the Analysis of Content Importance in Newspapers" (John E. Newhagen); "How Many News People Does a Newspaper Need?" (Philip Meyer and Minjeong Kim); "New(s) Players and New(s) Values? A Test of Convergence in the Newsroom" (Frank E. Fee, Jr.); "Newspaper Editors' and Educators' Attitudes About Public Trust, Media Responsibility and Public Journalism" (Tom Dickson and Elizabeth Topping); "The Non-Linear Web Story: An Assessment of Reader Perceptions, Knowledge Acquisition and Reader Feedback" (Wilson Lowrey); "Whose Values Are News Values? What Journalists and Citizens Want" (Frank E. Fee, Jr.); "On the Straight and Narrative: The Effect of Writing Style on Readers' Perceptions of News Story Quality" (Jean Kelly, Jan Knight, Jason Nedley, Lee Peck, and Guy Reel); "The Impact of Public Ownership, Profits and Competition on Number of Newsroom Employees and Starting Salaries in Mid-Sized Daily Newspapers" (Alan Blanchard and Stephen Lacy); "Framing a Mysterious Evil: U.S. Newspapers' Coverage of North Korean Leader Kim Jong II, 1994-2000" (Kwangjun Heo); "The Romance and Reality of Copy Editing: A Newsroom Case Study" (Glen L. Bleske); "Sourcing Patterns of National and Local Newspapers: A Community Structure Perspective" (Yonghoi Song); "A Different Nuclear Threat: A Comparative Study of the Press Coverage of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Accident and the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident in Two Soviet and Two American Elite Newspapers" (Elza Ibroscheva); "The Use of Electronic Mail as a Newsgathering Resource" (Bruce Garrison); "Watching the Watchdogs: An Ethnomethodological Study of News Decision Making At A Small Midwestern Newspaper" (Dharma Adhikari, Tracy Everbach and Shahira Fahmy); "'Portraits of Grief,' Reflectors of Values: The 'New York Times' Remembers Victims of September 11" (Janice Hume); "Prepared for Crisis? Breaking Coverage of September 11th on Newspaper Web Sites" (Quint Randle, Lucinda Davenport and Howard Bossen); "Practicing Diversity: An Exploratory

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Study of Implementing Diversity in the Newsroom" (Anne Johnston and Dolores Flamiano); "No Exceptions to the Rule: The Ubiquity of Journalism Norms Throughout 29 Years of Environmental Movement Coverage" (Linda Jean Kensicki); "News From Afghanistan: How Five U.S. Newspapers Covered the Taliban Before Sept. 11, 2001" (Beverly Horvit). (RS)

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Exploring the Turnover Issue:
Why Newspaper Reporters
Intend to Quit Their Jobs

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Abstract

This study explores factors behind newspaper reporters' turnover intentions and the link between their intent to leave their newspapers and their intent to leave journalism. A total of 361 Texas newspaper reporters were surveyed. Findings showed that overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, and marital status affect newspaper reporters' turnover intentions. The reporters' intent to leave their newspapers is also found to be a significant predictor of their intent to leave journalism.

Introduction

Turnover of the newspaper journalists has become an important issue for at least four reasons: (1) turnover of newspaper reporters has been higher than other professions of comparable status (Fedler, Buhr & Taylor, 1988; Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991); (2) high turnover is costly as additional operational costs incur after each employee leaves an organization (White, 1995); (3) newspapers need to cut costs as they have been suffering from readership losses (Dizard, 1994); and (4) newspapers need to find ways to keep their talents to provide quality news content amid competition from other media such as television and the Internet (Dizard, 1994; Sohn, Wicks, Lacy & Sylvie, 1999).

The turnover issue dose not concern the newspaper industry alone. As an issue of great interest to many other professions, employee turnover has been a highly popular research topic (Bluedorn, 1982a; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand & Meglino, 1979; Muchinsky & Morrow, 1980). Over the last century, an estimate of more than 1,500 publications have addressed the topic of turnover (Muchinsky & Morrow, 1980).

One apparent reason for the popularity is the fact that turnover is costly for any organization (White, 1995; Joinson, 2000). When an employee leaves an organization, there are both direct (i.e., out-of-pocket) and indirect costs involved (Joinson, 2000). The direct costs include layoff and hiring costs (Bertola, 1992) while indirect costs may come from a need for replacement training, unabsorbed workload, loss of profit contribution, lost business opportunities, and a "brain drain" after employees left (Joinson, 2000; Mirvis & Lawler, 1977, Tharp, 1991). If direct and indirect costs are added together, the turnover costs for an employee could be as high as over $4,000 to $10,000 (Joinson, 2000).

While turnovers are expensive, certain turnovers are not entirely bad for a newspaper (e.g., turnovers allowing the hiring of more bright reporters) (Moss, 1978). However, since turnover involves substantial personnel costs and a possible drain of experienced reporters, understanding how turnover occurs to avoid undesirable turnovers will benefit newspapers (Moss, 1978; White, 1995).

Toward the end of minimizing the negative impact from reporter turnovers, it would make more sense to probe turnover intensions (i.e., intent for turnover), more so than to study the actual turnover, as the former concerns current employees, while the later only addresses past employees (Birdseye & Hill, 1995; Werbel & Bedeian, 1989). In addition, research on turnover intentions is very useful because reviews on past research showed that turnover intentions is a strong predictor of job turnover (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Knowing the reasons behind turnover intent is therefore useful to newsroom managers who try to prevent undesirable turnovers.

Literature Review

Factors behind turnover intentions

Past research on journalists and other professions has shown that the following factors are likely to influence newspaper reporters' turnover intentions: (1) overall job satisfaction (Jenkins, 1993; Parasuraman, 1982; Tharp, 1991; Water & Roach, 1979; Weaver, & Wilhoit, 1996), (2) pay (Cook & Banks, 1993; Fedler et al., 1988; Kraut, 1975; Tharp, 1991, Weaver, & Wilhoit, 1996), (3) staff size (Bergen & Weaver, 1988; Cook & Banks, 1993; Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991), and (4) demographic variables such as age (Miller & Wheeler, 1992; Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991; Werbel & Bedeian, 1989), gender (Chusmir, 1984; Cook & Banks, 1993; Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991), martial status (Arnold & Feldman, 1982; Moss, 1978), and education (Bluedorn, 1982b; Martin, 1979).

(1) Overall job satisfaction

Empirical evidence showed that overall job satisfaction has an inverse relationship with turnover intentions for non-journalism employees (Jenkins, 1993; Parasuraman, 1982; Waters & Roach, 1979). It is likely that such a relation also exists for newspaper reporters because studies on journalists showed that low level of job satisfaction is a major factor causing their turnovers (Tharp, 1991; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996).

(2) Pay

Research on non-journalists discovered a link between pay and turnover intentions (Kraut, 1975), it is possible that such a relation also exists for newspaper reporters because (1) pay is a key factor behind journalists' turnover (Fedler et al., 1988; Tharp, 1991; Weaver & Wilhoit) and (2) turnover intentions is found to be the last link in the turnover process (Mobley, et al., 1979).

(3) Staff size

Organizational size has been found to affect the morale of newspaper journalists (Cook & Banks, 1993; Bergen & Weaver, 1988). Compared with their counterparts at larger papers, journalists at smaller newspapers are more likely to experience role ambiguity and multiple job assignments (Cook & Banks, 1993), which are related to job burnout (Iwanicki, 1982). As a result, reporters at newspapers with smaller staff or circulation sizes are more likely to quit their jobs (Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991). Since turnover intent often comes before the actual action of turnover (Dougherty, Bluedorn & Keon, 1985), it is likely that staff size is also a reason behind the reporters' turnover intentions.

(4) Demographic variables

Research on journalists and non-journalism workers showed that four demographic variables (age, gender, marital status, and education) are likely to affect their turnover intentions.

Age—An inverse relationship was found in the link between age and turnover intentions for non-journalism workers (Miller & Wheeler, 1992; Werbel & Bedeian, 1989). It is possible that such a negative relation also exists for newspaper reporters since older employees are much less likely to quit (Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991)

Gender—Although past research on journalists lacks evidences about the direct relationship between gender and turnover (Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991), women journalists are found to have less sense of achievement than their male colleagues (Cook & Banks, 1993). It is possible that the lower sense of achievement may make women journalists more likely to think about quitting, as newspaper reporters often have a high need for achievement (Chusmir, 1984; Tharp, 1991).

Marital status—Empirical evidence showed marital status has an inverse relation with turnover intentions for non-journalists (Arnold & Feldman, 1982), it is likely such a relationship also exists for newspaper reporters because single newspaper reporters are much more likely to change jobs than their married counterparts (Moss, 1978).

Education—Education was found to be a factor affecting turnover intent on non-journalism employees and a positive relation exist between the two variables (Bluedorn, 1982b; Martin, 1979). Despite with a lack of empirical evidence on the education-turnover intent link for journalists, it is possible such a link does exist in the case of newspaper reporters since higher education status often opens up more employment opportunities.

Different levels of turnover intentions

Investigating the likely factors behind newspaper reporters' turnover intentions mentioned above (overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, and demographic variables) would be useful because the findings from such a research would help managers prevent costly turnovers (Birdseye & Hill, 1995; Joinson, 2000; Werbel & Bedeian, 1989).

Since a reporter quitting his or her reporting job is still likely to stay on the same newspaper (Bennett, 1985), his or her intention to quit the reporting job and intention to leave the newspaper may not be entirely the same matter. It would be therefore interesting to see how the aforementioned factors (overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, and demographic variables) may contribute differently to the reporters' intent to quit the reporting jobs and intent to leave their newspapers.

What would also be interesting to investigate is how would the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers affects their intent to leave the profession, an extreme job movement that concerns the journalism industry due to the high turnover rates of newspaper reporters (Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). Past research showed the intent to leave the current employing organization is a major factor behind the intent to leave the profession and the two variables are positively related (Krausz, Koslowsky, Shalom & Elyakim, 1995). It is likely that such a relationship also exists for newspaper reporters because at least four of the seven reasons found in the literature review of the present study as likely factors behind reporters' intent to leave their newspapers—job satisfaction, pay, age, marital status—were also cited by journalists as possible reasons causing them to leave the journalism profession (Fedler et al., 1988; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996).

In conclusion, according to the literature review of the present study, there are seven possible factors affecting newspaper reporters' intentions to quit their reporting jobs and their intentions to leave their newspapers—overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status and education. Based on this, two research questions are generated:

RQ 1

To what extent do overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status and education affect newspaper reporters' intent to leave their reporting jobs?

RQ 2

To what extent do overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status and education affect newspaper reporters' intent to leave their newspapers?

In addition, the literature review of the current study also suggested that newspaper reporters' intent to leave their newspapers may be a factor behind their intent to leave the journalism profession. Based on this, a third research question is formulated:

RQ 3

To what extent do newspaper reporters' intent to leave their newspapers affect their intent to leave the journalism profession?

Method

Population

The population of the study is daily newspaper reporters in Texas. The Texas newspaper reporters is an interesting topic of study because the circulation distribution pattern of Texas newspapers is similar to that of the entire United States.[1]

Sampling

The original list of subjects contains 702 reporters acquired by two methods. First of all, reporter lists were obtained from seventeen daily newspapers in public libraries. Secondly, since Texas has a total of eighty-seven daily newspapers, the list of sixty-nine other newspapers was obtained from the Editor & Publisher International Year Book (1997). After mail correspondence, eleven of the sixty-nine newspapers agreed to provide lists of their reporters, totaling eighty-eight journalists. Adding the lists of subjects obtained through the methods produces a subject pool of 702 reporters.

A survey was used for this study because the method is aimed at probing general patterns of a population from which the sample was drawn (Babbie, 1990). After two mail-outs, 361 valid responses were obtained.[2] Because four of the original 702 subjects either had incorrect addresses or had quit their jobs, the actual sample pool was 698 subjects. Based on the adjusted sample pool, the response rate exceeds 52%, better than the 47% average rate for mail surveys (Wimmer & Domnick, 1994).

Operational definitions

Past research showed that overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status, and education are likely to be factors behind newspaper reporters' turnover intentions. The present study intended to probe how the above factors are likely to affect a reporter's intent to quit reporting and intent to leave his or her newspaper since a journalist quitting the reporting job may either work for another non-reporting job at the same newspaper or leave the paper altogether. The present study also aimed to explore how newspaper reporters' intent to leave their newspapers influences their intent to leave the field. In summary, the current research intended to test three links in the case of newspaper reporters: (1) the link through which a group of factors (overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status and education) affect the reporter's intent to quit their reporting jobs; (2) the link through which a group of factors (overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status and education) affect the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers; and (3) the link through which the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers influences their intent to leave the profession.

To measure the factors behind newspaper reporters' turnover intentions, the reporters' intent to leave the reporting jobs, their intent to leave their newspapers, and their intent to leave the profession, survey question items were used except for the variable of staff size:

Overall job satisfaction The questionnaire measured the respondents' overall job satisfaction by using seventy items revised from the widely applied seventy-two item job descriptive index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969), which has well-established reliability and validity (Johnson, Smith & Tucker, 1982; Schneider & Dachler, 1978). The JDI has five dimensions: work, supervision, pay, promotions and coworkers. Each dimension has eight to eighteen items. The respondents were asked to indicate whether each item corresponds to the nature of their jobs. Examples of the items include "fascinating" (from the work dimension), "asks my advice" (from the supervision dimension), "less than I deserve" (from the pay dimension), "promotion on ability" (from the promotions dimension), and "talk too much" (from the coworkers dimension). The five JDI dimensions were summed up to form the overall job satisfaction.

Pay The questionnaire measured the respondents' feelings about their pay by asking how they feel about their "salary and benefits" on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "not very good" to "a great deal."

Staff size The variable of staff size is measured by counting the number of reporters in each of the 28 Texas daily newspapers in the sample, based on a complete list of reporters for each paper available after the original sample pool of reporter lists is compiled.

Demographic factors (age, gender, marital status and education) The respondents' age information was obtained by asking them directly their actual age. The subjects' gender (male or female), marital status (single or married), and education levels (high school, college or graduate school) were also obtained through the same manner.

Intentions to leave reporting jobs, own newspapers, and *the journalism profession* The newspaper reporters' intentions to leave their reporting jobs was measured by the questionnaire item asking their likelihood of working as a reporter at their newspapers in the future. Similarly, the reporters' intentions to leave their newspapers was gauged by asking the subjects' likelihood of working for their newspapers in the future. Finally, the reporters' intent to leave the journalism field was tested by asking their likelihood of working in journalism in the future.

Research questions testing

The first research question of the present study asks to what extent overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status and education affect newspaper reporters' intent to leave their reporting jobs. To test the research question, a regression analysis was performed with the factors (overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, martial status and education) as the independent variables, and the reporters' intent to leave their reporting jobs as the dependent variable.

The second research question asks to what extent overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status and education affect newspaper reporters' intent to leave their newspapers. Similarly, a regression analysis was used to test the research question, with the factors (overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, martial status and education) as the independent variables, and the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers as the dependent variable.

The third research question asks to what extent newspaper reporters' intent to leave their newspapers affects their intent to leave the journalism profession. To test the research question, a regression analysis is conducted, with the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers as the independent variable and their intent to leave the journalism profession as the dependent variable.

Results

The sample of 361 newspaper reporters was 60.4% male, 81.7% White, 50.1% married, and 97.7% with at least a college education (82.5% were college graduates and 15.2% had graduate degrees). The median age was 34 years old, the average tenure was 7 years, and the median salary was in the range of $30,000 to $34,999. When compared with national samples of American newspaper journalists (Jennings, 1995; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1994), the demographics for the Texas daily newspaper reporters are very comparable.[3]

RQ 1

The first research question asks to what extent overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status and education affect newspaper reporters' intent to leave their reporting jobs. To test the research question, a regression analysis was conducted, with overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size (the number of reporters in the newsroom), age, gender, marital status, and education levels as the independent variables, and the reporters' intent to leave their reporting jobs as the dependent variable.

Results of the regression analysis showed that overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, and gender are significant predictors of the reporters' intent to leave their reporting jobs (see Table 1). Marital status and education, on the other hand, were not found to be significant predictors.

Table 1: Regression Analysis with Intention to Quit Reporting Jobs as Dependent Variable

Independent variables	Standardized Coefficients
Overall job satisfaction	-.193***
Pay	-.164**
Staff size	-.145**
Age	-.334***
Gender	-.096*
Marital status	-.079
Education	.041
Adjusted $R^2 = .338$	
$n = 361$	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Examining the positive or negative sign of the significant predictors reveals the relationship between the predictors and the dependent variable (Schroeder, Sjoquist & Stephan, 1986): all of the significant predictors have negative relationships with the dependent variable. For example, the negative value of the standardized coefficient for overall job satisfaction showed that lower the reporters' overall job satisfaction, the more likely the reporters will have intentions to quit their reporting jobs. Likewise, the negative value of the coefficient for age showed that the younger the reporters, the more likely they will be intending to quit reporting. Similarly, the negative value of the coefficient for pay indicated that the lower the pay, the more likely the reporters will have intent to quit their reporting jobs. In addition, the negative value of the coefficient for staff size showed that the smaller the size of the reporting staff, the more likely the reporters will be thinking about quitting reporting jobs. Lastly, since gender was measured as a dichotomous variable, with "0" coded as female and "1" as male, a negative sign of the gender variable showed that female reporters are more likely to think about quitting the reporting jobs than their male colleagues.

Moreover, examining the relative sizes of the standardized coefficients also reveals the effects of the significant predictors on the dependent variable (Schroeder, Sjoquist & Stephan, 1986). For example, judging from the sizes of the standardized coefficients, the most important predictors of the reporters' intent to quit reporting jobs are age and overall job satisfaction, followed by pay, staff size and gender.

RQ 2

The second research question asks to what extent overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status and education affect newspaper reporters' intent to leave their newspapers. To test the research question, a regression analysis was conducted, with overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size (the number of reporters in the newsroom), age, gender, marital status, and education levels as the independent variables, and the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers as the dependent variable.

Results showed that overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, and marital status are significant predictors of the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers (see Table 2). Gender and education were not found to be significant predictors.

Table 2: Regression Analysis with Intention to Leave Own Newspapers as Dependent Variable

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients
Overall job satisfaction	-.168***
Pay	-.145**
Staff size	-.153**
Age	-.384***
Gender	-.071
Marital status	-.092*
Education	.079

Adjusted $R^2 = .362$
$n = 361$

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Examining the positive or negative sign of the standardized coefficients reveals the relationship between the significant predictors and the dependent variable the reporters' intentions to leave their newspapers: all the significant predictors have negative relationships with the dependent variable. For example, the negative value of the standardized coefficient for overall job satisfaction showed the lower the reporters' overall job satisfaction, the more likely they will intend to leave their newspapers. Similarly, the negative sign of the coefficient for age showed the younger the reporters, the more likely they will be thinking about leaving their newspapers. Likewise, the negative value of the coefficient for pay showed that the lower the pay, the more likely the reporters will have intentions to leave their newspapers. In addition, the negative sign of the coefficient for staff size indicated the smaller the reporting staff size, the more likely the reporters will have intent to leave their news organizations. Lastly, since marital status is coded as dichotomous variable, with "0" as single reporters and "1" as married reporters, the negative sign of the coefficient for marital status showed that compared with their married colleagues, single reporters are more likely to think about leaving their newspapers.

Moreover, examining the relative sizes of the standardized coefficients also reveals that the most important predictors of the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers are age and overall job satisfaction, followed by staff size, pay and marital status.

RQ 3

The third research question asks to what extent newspaper reporters' intent to leave their newspapers affects their intent to leave the journalism profession. To test the research question, a regression analysis was conducted, with the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers as the independent variable, and the reporters' intent to leave the journalism field as the dependent variable.

Results from the analysis showed that newspaper reporters' intent to leave their newspapers is a significant predictor of their intentions to leave the journalism profession (see Table 3). In Table 3, the unstandardized coefficient, in addition to the standardized coefficient, was reported because the unstandardized coefficient explains how the dependent variable will vary with per unit change of the independent variable (Schroeder, Sjoquist & Stephan, 1986). The positive sign in front of the unstandardized coefficient indicated a positive link between the reporters' intent to leave newspapers and their intent to leave the journalism profession (Schroeder, Sjoquist & Stephan, 1986). In other words, this means the greater the reporters' intentions to leave their own newspapers, the more likely they will intend to leave the journalism profession. In addition, because the value of the unstarndardized coefficient is .369, this means every time when a newspaper reporter intends to leave his or her newspapers, there is a 36.9 percent chance that he or she also intends to leave the profession (Schroeder, Sjoquist & Stephan, 1986). Or, put another way, this can also mean when three reporters intend to leave their newspaper(s), approximately one of them may also intend to leave the journalism profession.

Table 3: Regression Analysis with Intention to Leave Journalism Profession as Dependent Variable

Independent variable	Unstandardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient
Intention to leave own newspapers	.369***	.440***
Adjusted $R^2 = .191$		
$n = 361$		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

The study explores how various factors (overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status, and education) affect newspaper reporters' intent to quit the reporting jobs and their intent to leave own newspapers. The study also explores how the reporters' intentions to leave their newspapers may influence their intent to leave the journalism profession. The results of the study are very interesting and should be very useful for newsroom managers trying to prevent undesirable and costly turnovers, which has been affecting the newspaper industry for decades (Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991).

First, different from previous research that used the frequency counts to report the relative importance of different factors behind journalists' turnovers (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996), the present study uses statistical analysis (i.e., multiple regression) to compare the importance of different contributors for journalists' intended turnovers (e.g., age, overall job satisfaction, staff size, and pay). Compared with frequency counts, the regression analysis allows the test of statistical significance for the contributing factors (i.e., independent variables). Among the significant independent variables found in this study to affect the reporters' turnover intentions, age and overall job satisfaction have been the most important ones, whether the dependent variable is the reporters' intent to quit their reporting jobs or their intent to leave the newspapers. The findings are similar to evidence from previous research on non-journalism employees that age and job satisfaction are two key factors influencing turnover intentions (Michaels & Spector, 1982). Similarly, the finding that pay is a significant predictor behind the reporters' turnover intentions to quit reporting and leave newspapers also confirmed past findings on non-journalists (Kraut, 1975). In addition, the finding that reporting staff size is a significant predictor behind the reporters' intent to quit reporting and their intent to leave newspapers also supported empirical evidence suggesting the influence of reporting staff size on employee morale (Cook & Banks, 1993; Bergen & Weaver, 1988). Another interesting finding is that gender is a significant predictor for the reporters' intent to quit reporting. Due to the negative relationship between gender and the reporters' intent to quit the reporting jobs, the finding suggested that female reporters are more likely to have intent to quit reporting. This evidence makes sense because (1) female journalists tend to less sense of achievement than their male counterparts (Cook & Banks, 1993); and (2) newspaper reporters have a high need for achievement (Chusmir, 1984; Tharp, 1991). In addition to gender, yet another intriguing finding of the present study is that marital status is a significant predictor of the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers. The findings would make a good inherent sense since marriage often comes with family obligations that will make employees less committed to their jobs (Becker & Moen, 1999; Boden, 1999).

Second, differing from past studies on journalists (Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996), the current study probes reasons behind turnover intentions rather than those behind the actual turnovers. Because research on turnover inventions focuses on current employees—rather than past employees as is the case of study on turnovers—the findings of the present research will be more relevant to newsroom managers who try to prevent undesirable turnovers among their employees. For example, the present research showed age has an inverse relationship with the reporters' intent to quit reporting jobs and their intent to leave their newspapers. Knowing this, newsroom managers can do a better job by paying more attention to younger reporters if the mangers want to reduce the overall turnover rates. If the goal is to keep the talented reporters, the managers will be better off by focusing on the younger outstanding reporters. In other words, the managers can do a better job in preventing undesirable turnovers if they learn from the present study why current employees intend to quit, rather than learn from study on actual turnovers about why past employees left.

Thirdly, the present study considered the influences of important demographic variables (age, gender, and marital status) on intended turnovers. The demographic factors are becoming an increasingly interesting issue to newsroom managers because (1) more women and older employees have joined the American newsroom (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1994; Saul, 1997; Voakes, 1997) and (2) more newspaper journalists have put their highest priority in marriage and family life (Giles, 1993; Voakes, 1997). In other words, the demographic and attitudinal changes in the journalism work force underscores the need to understand how age, gender and marital status may affect newspaper reporters' turnover intentions. The findings from the present study showed younger, unmarried and female reporters are likely to have more turnover intentions. As the number of women reporters are clearly on the rise (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1994), one of the greatest challenges newsroom managers face in their drives to stem turnovers may come from the increasing number of female reporters.

Lastly, the present study discovers a strong, positive link between the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers and their intent to leave the field, an extreme job move that the newspaper industry has been concerned with due to its high turnover rates (Moss, 1978; Tharp, 1991; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). The findings that one in every three reporters intending to leave their newspapers also has an intention to leave the journalism field is interesting. If the same one-in-three ratio holds true for the relationship between the reporters actually leaving the newspapers and the reporters leaving the field, this could mean that as high as 9 percent of newspaper reporters may leave the journalism profession every year (Moss, 1978).[4]

Limitations of the study include the fact the study did not measure newspaper reporters' actual turnovers. Exploring the strength of the link between the reporters' turnover intentions and their actual turnovers may help newsroom managers to more accurately estimate turnover occurrence, especially if they are able to use the significant predictors found in the present study to predict their reporters' turnover intentions. Another limitation is the sample size. Although the size of the sample was adequate, an even larger sample would provide even stronger evidence.

Nevertheless, the study is very interesting and useful. It explored and discovered how a group of factors (overall job satisfaction, pay, staff size, age, gender, marital status, and education) contribute to newspaper reporters' intent to quit the reporting jobs and their intent to leave their newspapers. It also found a significant link between the reporters' intent to leave their newspapers and their intent to leave the profession. At a time when the newspaper industry is still facing the costs of high reporter turnovers, the findings from the present study will be helpful for conscientious newspaper managers wishing to reduce turnovers to lower operational expenses and keep newsroom talents.

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Notes:

[1] The circulation makeup of Texas newspapers is akin to that of the United States (Editor & Publisher International Year Book, 1997). For example, about 0.5% of U.S. daily newspapers belong to the circulation category of more than 500,000, similar to the 2.3% ratio in Texas. For the 250,001-500,000 circulation category, the similarity is striking -- 2.1% of U.S. dailies fall under the category, compared with 2.3% of dailies in Texas.

[2] The survey was conducted in spring 1998.

[3] The demographics of the Texas reporters sampled in this study are very comparable to national samples of American newspaper journalists in terms of gender, ethnicity, education, age, and salary, as the following table shows:

Demographic categories		National sample	Texas sample
Gender	Male	66.1%	60.4%
	Female	33.9%	39.6%
Ethnicity	White	89.1%*	81.7%
	Non-white	10.1%*	18.3%
Education	College graduates**	84.3%	97.7%
	Non-college graduates	15.7%	2.3%
Others	Median age	37	34
	Median salary	35,000	30,000-34,999

* Except for the figures for ethnicity, statistics in all other demographic categories for the national sample come from Weaver and Wilhoit's 1992 national survey (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1994). The figures for ethnicity for the national sample comes from a 1994 survey conducted by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (Jennings, 1995).
** College graduates refer to those with at least a Bachelor's degree.

[4] According to Moss (1978), the average turnover rate for all types of newspapers could be as high as 28 percent.

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Reporters, Robes, and Representative Government

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Abstract

Reporters, Robes, and Representative Government

This study investigates how differences in institutional goals at the U.S. Supreme Court and Congress lead to differences in source usage in newspaper articles. Matched pairs of articles by reporters at the same news organizations and surveys of these reporters provide data. The study indicates significant differences in source usage, which support a theoretical approach that reporting practices and news content are affected by an institution's goal to maintain its legitimacy rather than journalistic norms.

Reporters, Robes and Representative Government

It can be forcefully argued that an institution's legitimacy is forged, not in its actions, but in how its role in governing a society is portrayed in the media. It is important, then, to determine the most salient influences on media coverage of different institutions and to examine if those influences result in significantly different coverage. Ultimately, does that coverage contribute to the continued legitimizing of particular institutions?

The very concept of the press as the fourth estate assumes a press corps that is independent of government influence and that operates under its own set of rules. As the watchdogs of government, journalists must be untethered, aggressive canines with a healthy appetite for digging up what lies beneath an institution's actions. It is woefully insufficient simply to report the who, what and when of institutional outcomes. Such reporting would be considered no more than propaganda and would provide the public with nothing more than what an institution desires to make public. Instead, it is meticulous scrutiny of the how and why of institutional processes and outcomes that sets reporting apart from propaganda.

However, the media's ability–indeed its freedom–to delve into the how and why of institutional outcomes is not defined by the press. As furthered by this study, the rules are instead defined by the particular institution. The Court remains relatively insulated from aggressive press coverage–a notion that has endured the life of the Court. While this study focuses on newspaper coverage, it takes into account the perspectives and influences of reporters in other media. Online Supreme Court reporter Dahlia Lithwick points out: "Reporters who cover the Court are the most deferential group of reporters I know. The Court is the branch of government that needs the most scrutiny but gets the least."[1] This study asserts that each institution sets its own rules for press coverage based on factors that will contribute to the legitimacy of the institution. The differences in rules and the resulting interplay between government and reporters could not be more stark than those found in the contrast between the U.S. Supreme Court and Congress: "...the Court has a strong tradition of not catering to the needs of the media. Indeed, unlike congressmen and the president, the justices do not provide a vast array of public relations materials to the press" (Berkson 1978: 59). Members of Congress are eager to take public positions on institutional decisions to defend and define their individual roles and perpetuate political success by communicating with constituencies through media. However, the Supreme Court seeks unanimity, not individuality, and does not engage in public defense of its actions. Antonin Scalia uses a sports analogy to illustrate the difference:

> It is a long and venerable tradition of common law judges to not respond to public criticism ... with respect to public criticism of legislation or proposed legislation, the sponsoring members of the legislative branch will often come to their own defense. Judges, however, are traditionally confined to the manner of

> defense that finds its equivalent in the world of boxing, in what Mohammed Ali...called his rope-a-dope trick...he described it as a tactic of lying back against the ropes and letting your opponent beat the bejabbers out of you until he gets tired (1994: 263).

Media provide the critical link between government and the masses. The press, writes Davis, is that "primary linking mechanism between the Court and public." (1994a: 16). Some scholars (Barron 1967: 1641-69) have gone further, claiming that government owes the public an open discourse on varying points of view regarding its political outcomes. The Court's legitimacy rests on public understanding and compliance with its actions.

It may be argued that Court coverage need not contribute to the democratic process given that justices are appointed, rather than elected, and should be insulated from the democratic process. Quite to the contrary, the Court is neither insulated from the democratic public in forming its opinions nor in delivering them. Public participation in Court deliberations (e.g. *amicus* briefs) and public reaction to decisions are crucial in the constitutional process. Berkson outlines four possible reactions among the public: compliance, noncompliance, evasion and reversal seeking (Berkson 1978: 2-3). Scholars, such as Marshall (1989: 192), strongly assert that the Court carefully considers public response in crafting decisions and issuing holdings. The public bestows legitimacy on the Court, and in kind, the Court is a formidable "legitimizing force" in the democratic process (Bickel 1986: 31).

Reporters with experience covering other institutions acknowledge that covering the Court is an unusual form of journalism that demands new ways of investigating the process and its resulting news reports (Greenhouse 1996: 1539). The fundamental proposition here is that it is the institutional characteristics of the particular branch of government that, first, affect the sources available to journalists in the form of information subsidies (Gandy 1982), and second, affect the content of media stories: "News in Washington can be seen as the product of the interaction of two bureaucracies—one composed of newsmen and the other of officials. From one theoretical perspective, news is the outcome of organizational politics" (Sigal 1973: 181). This study attempts to illuminate that interplay by examining the sources used in reports about the Court and Congress.

Ultimately, it may not at all be reporters' professional decisions that influence their source usage: "Despite the availability of numerous information sources, journalists' decisions to use them may be patterned by influences other than concerns for audience needs or adherence to professional norms" (Powers et al. 1994: 87).

In the case of Supreme Court reporters, the peculiar environment in which they work—a limited interaction with primary sources and perhaps exaggerated one with other types of sources—may have the most poignant influence on their use of sources:

> The interaction between journalists and news sources is an important force shaping the news. Journalists usually

> learn about events and issues through news sources, and most of the information that journalists subsequently gather about those events and issues comes from news sources. This interaction between journalists and sources is not the same for every situation, though, but is mediated by the context of the news. As interaction changes, so does the information (Berkowitz et al. 1994: 4).

The difference between the interaction of members of Congress and the Supreme Court with the press has an immediate bearing on source usage. The granting of interviews by government sources is a way of exerting control over members of the press. A source may withhold interviews if he or she is dissatisfied with a reporter's stories. This common occurrence in Congress is absent in the relationship between members of the press and Supreme Court, which produces paradoxical results, according to Tony Mauro, Court correspondent for Legal Times and American Lawyer Media: "[Supreme Court reporters] have virtually no access to the justices. The justices, unlike Congress, can't manipulate us by granting or denying interviews and access. Reporters can't pay [by losing access] for the way they cover the Court. You would think that would free us up to be very aggressive in the way we cover the justices—but we're not."[2]

If justices do not exert power over reporters in ways similar to Congress, then in what ways do they exert power, and exactly what is the nature and source of that influence? It appears to be a peculiarly hegemonic power, since the influence does not seem as direct as that of members of Congress. Ultimately, do justices exert influence over reporters' source usage by less direct—though certainly no less potent—means?

To promote understanding of the most salient influences on media coverage of the Court and Congress and to determine if those influences result in significantly different coverage, this five-year study examines questions from several angles, including quantitative content-analysis of newspaper reports about both institutions, surveys and interviews with newspaper reporters who cover the Court and Congress, and a discussion of recent anomalies that have arisen in covering the judiciary.

Much work on Court coverage has been disparaging: "...most politicians are not so naive as to believe that journalists serve only as conveyor belts for their political pronouncements. But unlikely as it seems, U.S. Supreme Court justices have employed such a model for more than 150 years with considerable success. And journalists, until recently, have not vigorously objected" (Press et al. 1988: 249).

When these objections surface, they appear to be impetuous: The Supreme Court has "the most primitive arrangement in the entire communications industry for access to an important source of news material and distribution of information generated by that source" (MacKenzie 1976: 355). The press-government relations practices of the Court could be characterized as unique. With the exception of the printed opinions of the Court, the press receives little or no information that the Court originates itself. Thus, reporters are likely to turn to sources external to the institution. Congress, on the other hand, may at times inundate journalists with information in attempts to achieve spin control, seek positive campaign coverage, or compete with the president–who commandeers most media attention (Graber 1989: 254-7). Justices and their PIO do not engage in comment on decisions, nor do they manage spin control or actively compete with another branch for coverage.

Nina Totenberg of National Public Radio noted the difference in covering the Court and Congress: When covering Congress, "You're covering people who want to be in the public eye. The justices do not, and it's considered to be improper to ask the justices about a pending case."[3]

The Court itself has joined in the criticism, and Justices Earl Warren, Tom C. Clark, John M. Harlan, William O. Douglas, and William J. Brennan, Jr., all have rebuked both the quality and quantity of coverage (Berkman et al. 1986: 251-2). Although the greatest volume of criticism of Court coverage has sprung from scholars, the public, and justices themselves, it was a reporter who is chiefly responsible for the impetus of scholarly inquiry. The reporter, Max Freedman of the Manchester Guardian, wrote in 1956, that of the three branches of government, "The Supreme Court is the worst reported and worst judged institution in the American system of government" (Davis 1994a: 42). Freedman's charge touched off a small, but notable, series of studies about the quality of Court coverage. Most findings claimed to affirm Freedman's statement–but only in unilateral studies that looked at coverage of the Court alone. No study took an empirical approach until

David Ericson (1977) analyzed the content of newspaper reports of Court decisions.

Ericson's work sought to "provide quantitative support for the general impression that the Supreme Court is the worst reported of the three branches of the Federal Government" (1977:605). However, Ericson did not compare coverage of the Court with another branch. Instead he developed a "model report" and compared Court coverage to that model. He concluded: "In a sense all the talk about getting the full story on Supreme Court decisions is a little premature when what we are getting now from newspapers is, at best, a fourth of the story" (1977: 607).

Studies by Hale (1979) and Katsh (1983) affirmed sparse coverage of Supreme Court decisions and Court business by newspapers and television. Solomine (1980), Tarpley (1984), and Bowles and Bromley (1993) then turned to newsmagazine coverage. They found that, while the quality and depth of newsmagazine coverage was an improvement over newspapers and television, newsmagazines nonetheless failed to cover the Supreme Court any more comprehensively. Tarpley reported, "[Newsmagazine] stories demonstrate some breadth and depth of reporting, although readers certainly can't claim to be getting the full story yet" (1984: 826).

The concept that the Court deserves comparable coverage to the other two branches of government rests on the assumption that the public does indeed interact with the Court. The Court itself has expressly protected First Amendment press rights with explicit references to promoting an informed public to enhance political participation (Marshall 1989: 40). Compliance theory holds fast to the assumption that the Court's legitimacy depends on public opinion regarding its decisions and reverence for the Court's actions. The ultimate test for any constitutional decision is found in how well the masses comply with Court decisions (Murphy et al. 1964). Utility theory takes compliance a step further, arguing that people perform cost-benefit analysis on decisions of the Supreme Court and informally decide by consensus whether to honor a holding (Brown et al. 1977). The implication is that an informed public is crucial in legitimizing Court decisions and legitimacy.

Berkson found that the public would favor more comprehensive and quality coverage of the Court (1978). Among respondents, 94.8 percent believed that Court decisions affect their personal lives, and 96.9 percent said decisions affect their work (1978: 23-4).

Marshall's "Four Judicial Theories on Public Opinion" contain the critical link of public opinion and an informed public, which relies on media that are active, responsive and accurate. Marshall contradicts the concept that the Court is aloof from the public and media—and this contradiction is important. He charges that the Supreme Court is, conversely, actively engaged in the process of affecting public opinion: "The Court compares some law against contemporary or evolving public opinion and may strike down laws or policies held to be inconsistent. The Court assesses public attitudes, and existing laws or policies separately" (1989: 48).

Berkson asserts that the public passes final judgment on Court decisions (1978: 21). Poignant examples of the thin foundation of legitimacy on which the Court relies are found in public reaction to Brown v. Board of Education, "The School Prayer Decisions" and Roe v. Wade. In these cases, the exchange between the Court and public relied, first, on media coverage as the initial critical link. Each of these instances has been met with a mix of support before a decision is issued and civil disobedience in response to Court holdings. The volatile nature of these decisions led the Court to a heightened level of sensitivity to public opinion. The violent deaths of abortion-clinic employees at the hands of individuals opposed to abortion rulings, for example, has constituted the extreme form of civil disobedience.

Marshall's assertion that the Court is sensitive to public opinion is based on content analysis of written Court opinions that specifically appeal to public opinion. Since Marshall's work, the Court has become more direct in discussions of public opinion and its potential effect on the Court's legitimacy. An overt example is Planned Parenthood v. Casey, delivered by Sandra Day O'Connor, joined by Anthony Kennedy and David Souter, in 1992:

> ...overruling Roe's central holding would not only reach an unjustifiable result under principles of stare decisis, but would seriously weaken the Court's capacity to exercise the judicial power and to function as the Supreme Court of a Nation dedicated to rule of law. To understand why this would be so it is necessary to understand the source of this Court's authority, the conditions necessary for its preservation, and its relationship to the country's understanding of itself as

> a constitutional Republic ... The Court cannot buy support for its decisions by spending money and, except to a minor degree, it cannot independently coerce obedience to its decrees. The Court's power lies, rather, in its legitimacy, a product of substance and perception that shows itself in the people's acceptance of the Judiciary as fit to determine what the Nation's law means and to declare what it demands (505 U.S. 833),.

This majority opinion points out two important aspects of the Court's relationship to the public: First, the Court views its authority in stark contrast to the other two branches. The legislative branch has the power to "buy support for its decisions" through its fiscal powers and pork-barrel legislation. The executive branch has the power to "independently coerce obedience to its decrees" as commander in chief of the armed forces. Brown v. Board of Education had little force until the president ordered the National Guard to enforce the Court's decision.

The Court views itself as relatively powerless in discharging the effects of its decisions. Therefore, secondly, as O'Connor writes, the Court's actions must be met by a high degree of acceptance by the public. Because the press is the primary linking mechanism between the Court and the public, the work of media is all-the-more crucial. It can be claimed that, up until this point in history with few exceptions, the media have assisted the Court in maintaining its legitimacy. This may be due to effects of conflict-functionalist reporting (Tichenor et al. 1980).

O'Connor, joined by the majority in Planned Parenthood, clearly believes the Court and public interact and that the public's opinion is crucial to the Court's legitimacy. It is unsettling that at least Scalia believes the public is not capable of accurately analyzing Court decisions—the products of the Court's work:

> In most areas of human endeavor, no matter how technical or abstruse, the product can be fairly evaluated by the layman. The bridge does or does not sustain the load for which it was designed. The weather forecast is or is not usually accurate. The medical treatment does or does not improve the patient. I maintain that judging, or at least judging in a democratic system is different...A judicial decision with good results is not necessarily sound, and a judicial decision with bad results is not necessarily faulty...The general-circulation press will ordinarily report the outcome of a decision and its practical consequences. That is fair enough. But the public should understand...that those limited data, outcome, and consequences are not sufficient, not necessarily even relevant data for deciding whether [a decision] was a good one (Davis 1994b: 263-5).

Scalia's remarks reveal the inspiration behind the traditionally tight-lipped relationship between the Court and media. To Scalia, the outcome and consequences are insufficient to evaluate a Court decision—but the best that the public will get.

Despite the Court's reliance on public opinion for its own preservation and compliance with its decisions, justices hold to an enigmatic and aloof posture. However, it is precisely this enigma that Bickel claims casts "a spell" on the media and public (1986: 29).

The vast volume of literature—both scholarly and popular—suggests a Supreme Court that is marked by an enigma that is part of a well-established historical tradition. A few of the most controversial works include The Brethren, The Cult of the Court, and Cloak and Gavel. All implicate a Supreme Court that is less than genuine in its portrayal of its work to the public. However, a genuine portrayal of the Court's work may not be what the Court strives toward, as noted by Chief Justice Earl Warren:

> The Court has always been opposed to participating in the writing of anything which portrays it and its work. They prefer to have whatever is written about the Court to be done entirely independent of it. I know this practice has resulted in much misinformation about the Court which could be easily explained, but I have always joined with the majority of the Court in taking those chances rather than to have it appear that we are writing either in defense of ourselves or as an institution (Davis 1994a: 9).

The 'How' of Covering the Court

The Court's Public Information Office hands out published opinions or announces decisions without comment in much the same manner that it always has: Decisions are handed down several at a time with only the published opinion as the source of information. In the case of denials of certiorari, only a news release is issued. No rationale is offered. When written majority opinions are delivered, they are handed down in groups. A dozen decisions is not an unlikely number, and thus, journalists are severely limited in the amount of coverage they may afford all decisions. In most cases, a single decision will dominate coverage while others are handled in only a cursory manner—or not at all (Berkman et al. 1986: 252).

Other challenges face the Supreme Court press corps. On-the-record interviews with justices remain highly unusual, and interpretation of decisions and their implications remain the domain of commentators external to the government institution, such as interest groups. However, unlike reporters covering other branches, Supreme Court reporters have significantly greater limits on access to original sources. Neither justices nor PIO officials offer interpretation beyond the published opinion. "The PIO is the Court's public spokesperson on matters other than the interpretation of its opinions and orders. The justices believe that their opinions and orders must speak for themselves" (Goldinger 1990: 97).

Thus, the final news product of Court decisions that reaches the public relies predominantly on reporters, their decisions of what to cover, and interpretations of those decisions by the sources they cite. This is in stark contrast to journalists who cover other beats. John Brigham contrasts the Supreme Court reporters' efficacy compared to other Washington reporters: "The media and staff at the Court contribute to the public presentation of both cases and court activities but far less than at the White House or Capitol...The Court's protective cloak has always stood between the public and the political institution" (1987: 114).

The way beats are allocated by news organizations also impacts reporters' abilities at the Court to devote the necessary time to analyze the Court's actions. Only about half of the reporters devote their efforts full-time to the Supreme Court--unlike other federal government beats, which are full time. (Sherman 1988: 32). Despite the fact justices have criticized media coverage, it appears the Court itself is unwilling to improve coverage by disseminating explanations or handing down decisions in a more manageable manner.

According to former Supreme Court PIO Toni House, the most influential sources for reporters and the public are special interest group spokesmen and spokeswomen. Because of the absence of interaction between justices and reporters, House said: "The linkage [of interpreting Court decisions] is between the news media and academic world and legal experts. They're all interested in each other. Reporters try to make news stories easily digestible for the public. [After which] it's the citizen-based organizations that have the most influence over public opinion about the Court."[4] Gandy's assertion that interest groups may serve as information subsidies becomes more meaningful when information from the Court is extraordinarily "expensive" in terms of time and energy spent poring through decisions and briefs (1982: 38).

Current Supreme Court PIO Kathy L. Arberg said few changes have taken place in the dynamics of coverage since she succeeded House in 1999, with the exception of the advent of Internet coverage, especially that of Dahlia Lithwick, who writes for Slate.com, and, of course, the live broadcast of the 2000 election case Bush v. Gore (531 U. S. ____), both which will be discussed in further detail.

The 'How' of Covering Congress

Conflict-functionalist concerns found for reporters who cover the Supreme Court are equally applicable to reporters who cover Congress—but for precisely antithetical reasons: "Close personal relationships have long flourished between [members of Congress] and the press, tempting reporters to become participants as well as observers...The historical relationship between press and politicians in Washington has been far more intimate than adversarial" (Ritchie 1991: 1).

A chasm between journalists and members of Congress is virtually transparent. The line between them is so feeble that role-reversals are not uncommon. It has become routine for journalists to switch sides and enter political life, such as Al Gore's move from journalism to the U.S. Senate and ultimately the vice presidency. Jesse Helms began as a journalist before running for Senate. Geraldine Ferraro moved to television commentary from Congress and a bid for the vice presidency—alongside a commentator, Pat Buchanan, who has run for president. This is not a new phenomenon. New York Tribune editor Horace Greely was elected to Congress in 1848 (Ritchie 1991: 42). This role-reversal has never been found among the Court and its press corps.

Congress has gone to great lengths to accommodate the needs of the press with seven press galleries—all within the Capitol building itself. Several galleries are for broadcast media and one is exclusively for still photographers (Elving 1994: 186). Of course, all cameras are absent from the Court. No fewer than 331 members of the media, national and local, cover Congress (Coursen-Parker 1994: 158). The importance of interest groups and lobbyists as sources is not at all peculiar to the Supreme Court: "The forte of the lobbyist is his specific knowledge about particular items being considered by the legislature, a knowledge that surpasses that of many others in the policy-making process"(Dunn 1969: 52-3). The fact that interest groups appear equally valuable to reporters who cover the Court and Congress makes any difference found in their use as sources more intriguing. This study seeks to reveal those differences.

Between 1960 and 1984, the number of press secretaries hired by the Senate grew threefold (Hess 1991: 62). No such growth among public-information personnel has ever taken place at the Supreme Court, which still relies on one officer, one deputy and interns.

The importance of sources as a critical variable in gathering information, whether at the Supreme Court or in Congress, is shared by many reporters. Reporters attribute their success in their jobs solely to the sources they have been able to promulgate and have gone as far as to identify source usage as the single, most crucial tool: "The only important tool of the reporter is his news sources and how he uses them ... they provide the information which permits a reporter to go beyond describing mere surface events in his story" (Dunn 1969: 40-1).

Studies have not examined the content of articles about the Court in comparison to another branch using an observable measure. This study examines source usage in the actual reports filed by those who cover the Court and Congress as the observable phenomenon and central variable that may be compared in articles about the Court and Congress. It compares source usage by constructing discernible categories of sources and quantitatively examining the frequency of their occurrence in stories about the two institutions.

Guarding the Marble Palace

The concepts of conflict-functionalist reporting, information subsidies, agenda setting, and the public sphere all have direct relevance to this study. A variety of explanations has been offered as to why media content is as it is, ranging from the individual characteristics of media professionals, such as ideology, to daily routines of journalists or the organizational structure of a particular medium (Shoemaker et al. 1991: 115-118). However, most of these theories rest on the assumption that journalists make decisions in a vacuum over which outside influences have little control. Theories, such as agenda setting, take that assumption to the extreme and assert that it is the "day-by-day judgments" of journalists that determine the selection and content of news stories (McCombs et al. 1972: 176).

In the case of covering the Court, in which it is the institution that predetermines the day's news, such theories may not be sufficient. An effective means of understanding how journalists use sources is within the conflict-functionalist perspective. Each branch of government is institutionally devised to maximize its power within government. Development along a conflict-functionalist evolution is essential to the success of a democracy and pluralist forms of government, lest they "ossify" (Coser 1967: 24).

Conflict-functionalist theory emphasizes external influences on the media as the primary determinants of media content. It is the peculiarities of the particular institution itself that predetermine how it will be covered and thus, influence content. With this assumption comes the proposition that journalists covering a particular branch of government are absorbed into its institutional setting: "The reporter on the beat gradually absorbs the perspectives of the senior officials he is covering. This absorption is not as much due to the attitudes he brings to the job as it is necessary to his performance on it" (Sigal 1973: 47).

In this sense it is the day-to-day operation of the government institution—not of newsrooms—that determines content. Journalists are absorbed into the institutional setting of the Capitol Press Gallery or the Supreme Court Public Information Office and operate in a world separate from their readers—and from their editors. Source selection and usage are not based on journalistic judgment. Rather, they are based on the way in which a government institution and its resulting press corps function.

Journalists, then, become part of a "power oligarchy in the system," as suggested by Donohue, Tichenor and Olien—thus, preserving the power structure in which they have become an integral player. This perspective of the role of media sees journalists at neither the extreme of "watchdog" or "lapdog." Rather, media are seen as the "guard dog" of the institutions they cover. The actions of journalists are shaped by the "nature of the structure they serve" (1995: 115-6).

In the context of a guard-dog perspective, different journalistic practices, such as the use of sources, may be attributed to the nature of the beat. Journalists in Washington are particularly vulnerable to absorption by the institution they cover: "The most fundamental premise of Washington journalists has always been that the journalist desires to be a partner in power, not a mere observer on the sidelines..." (Bethell 1977: 36). A study that examines sources as information subsidies at the Supreme Court is clearly needed. The seminal work on information subsidies, Beyond Agenda Setting (Gandy 1982: 38), investigates only the executive and legislative branches of government and does not attempt to deal with the phenomenon at the Supreme Court.

The availability and accessibility of primary government sources at the Supreme Court and in Congress is markedly different. In Congress, where "there are 535 [government] officials free to issue statements on virtually anything" (Gandy 1982: 79), there is an abundance of source opportunities. At the Supreme Court, justices rarely grant on-the-record interviews, and there is only one official spokeswoman, who by design is not free to comment on the rationale of a Court decision. The Court's public posture rests on an image of four components: unanimity, independence, distance, and immunity (Davis 1994a: 3-8). As Justice Byron White said, upon his retirement, "I am very pleased to be able to walk around, and very, very seldom am I recognized" (Mauro 1996: 264). To the contrary, recognition is essential to the successful campaigns of members of Congress.

The Court's legitimacy rests specifically on being seen as an apolitical institution, one that is immune to robust, public, political debate. Conversely, members of Congress wish to be seen as political—that they are accountable to constituents and party leaders. Members of Congress rely on press reports for key signals of voting behavior of others in Congress and to help discern the views of party leaders and of constituents (Sigal 1973: 83).

The importance of how media cover different institutions is punctuated by concepts such as Habermas' public sphere (1989). According to one interpretation of this theory, mass media are central to the development of modern societies: "[Because] a process of open, rational public communication, the existence of what has become known as the public sphere, is integral to the modernist theory of politics...the mass media, as technological systems and economic institutions, are a product and exemplar of the rationalizing tendencies of modernity, while at the same time they are seen as one of the crucial infrastructures..." (Garnham 1993: 253). The Supreme Court has successfully "defined the public realm" in its dealings with members of media (Mukerji et al. 1991: 36). There should be significant differences between source usage and what reporters who cover the two institutions say about the value of particular sources.

Data Collection and Analysis

A full roster of thirty reporters who cover the Supreme Court as their primary beat was solicited from the Supreme Court Public Information Office. The survey of reporters who cover the Supreme Court achieved an 83.33 percent response rate. An 87.5 percent response rate was achieved for reporters who cover Congress.

A quantitative content analysis of source usage in actual news reports written by reporters who were respondents to the surveys followed. The unit of analysis is a direct or indirect citation of a specific source. Traditionally, sources are divided into two fundamental categories, primary and secondary. Primary sources are considered those that originate information, and secondary sources are those that stand between the primary source and information gatherer (Kessler et al. 1992: 16). This study examines a greater range of source usage and breaks sources into four meaningful categories for analyzing sources used in articles about government:

I. Members of the Institution: Justices of the Supreme Court, Congressional Representatives and Senators.

II. Staff of the Institution and other Public Officials: Supreme Court and Congressional staffs, Attorney General, Solicitor General, spokesmen or spokeswomen for the institution and its members.

III. Participants in Proceedings of the Institutions: Includes, for example, witnesses before Congress and its committees and filers of amicus briefs.

IV. Non-participant Commentators: Includes private citizens, scientific researchers, academic theorists, and individuals not directly involved in government proceedings.

The categories were constructed to be mutually exclusive, exhaustive and reliable. Each category represents a group of individuals with notably different relationships of power to the Supreme Court or Congress. The category of Members of the Institution represents individuals whose power relationships in society are well-defined. Their membership in government is determined by election or appointment. Staff of the Institution is individuals who, under the authority of Members of the Institution, carry out the work of government. Participants in Proceedings represent a category of individuals who take part in the work of government either by invitation or initiation. Nonparticipant Commentators do not exert any calculable direct influence on an institution. They are bystanders to the work of government and outside the public sphere vis-à-vis the subjects of the articles in which they are cited. However, all individuals in this category also have the potential to participate in proceedings at the invitation of institutions, at which point they become members of the preceding category.

Articles were collected throughout 1997, and the sample was based on a matched-pair design. Publications were selected contingent on their assigning reporters to cover the Court as a primary beat. These are the same reporters who were respondents to the survey. Their counterparts at the same publications were identified and were the respondents to the survey of reporters who cover Congress. The publications and wire services for this study include: The Associated Press, The Baltimore Sun, The Chicago Tribune, The Dallas Morning News, Gannett News, The Houston Chronicle, The Los Angeles Daily Journal, The Los Angeles Times, The Milwaukee Journal, The New York Times, Reuters, United Press International, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and The Washington Times.

The collection of matched-pair articles yielded 106 news reports, producing a notable sample size for the unit of quantitative analysis, source attributions, which totaled 715. These source-usage data were subjected to statistical tests to determine statistically significant differences in source usage. Finally, the same stories were read to discern key qualitative differences in stories about the separate institutions.

The dependent variable, source usage, was compared to the independent variable, government institution. Only statements that were specifically attributed to an individual or institution were considered an occurrence of source usage. Some limitations of this study include the fact that it does not examine how source usage affects quality of reports. Usage of different categories of sources alone is not sufficient to determine quality of articles. Furthermore, uncited source usage is not a component of this study, and these sources are often critical in determining the context of articles and to edify a reporter's understanding of a case, as many reporters said during interviews, including Washington Times reporter Frank Murray.[5]

Because respondents for the survey of reporters who cover Congress were chosen based on having counterparts who cover the Court, the study cannot provide representation of all reporters who cover Congress. For the purpose of this study, this specific sample provides more meaningful data than a sample of all reporters who cover Congress. By limiting the sample to only publications and wire services with reporters assigned to cover both institutions, differences in news organizations can be controlled.

For reporters who cover the Court, the open-ended response section of the survey was used to criticize the absence of sources and the difficulty of the practice of covering the Court. In contrast, reporters who cover Congress used the section to address what they believe are important issues to cover, especially the budget process. The Court press corps questionnaires consistently criticized the process of covering the Court: "Nothing undermines coverage of the Court more than the tendency of justices to bunch up their decisions (often incoherent decisions) at the end of the term." Thus, savvy reporters interview sources long before decisions are delivered. Although most respondents focused on the obstacles to covering the Court, there was one stark exception: "At the Supreme Court, there is a clarity of language, as well as finality, that is a reporter's dream." Frustrations, however, abound: "The discussions we have with Justices about the Court's work are rare and if they relate to a particular case, it is always a case long ago."

In contrast to the need to discuss particular cases, one respondent suggested a different approach to covering the Court altogether, although an approach that treats justices more "as human beings" may be difficult given the lack of access: "Too many...reporters only cover decisions and give no attention to the justices as human beings or the institution as a place where 300 people work."

Dahlia Lithwick of Slate.com has responded to this complaint. Her work to humanize the Court on the Internet has been recognized by her colleagues, and Columbia University awarded her a 2001 Online Journalism Award. Lithwick says she sets out to humanize the justices: "The Court has been able to completely immunize itself from being human—but, ultimately, this is a personal business. The attempt by the Court to create an oracle of Delphi is very antidemocratic."[6] Lithwick focuses on describing the oral arguments, as shown in one of her award-winning pieces about Bush v. Gore, in which she changes the name Rehnquist to Rehnquistio:

> It's better than Shakespeare. It's Shakespeare without the dead people.
>
> A powerful ruler has held his fractious kingdom together by nothing more than the dint of his will. He has no power—"neither sword, nor purse"—other than what is accorded him by history and popular acceptance. Well aware of this, the iron-willed monarch (call him Rehnquistio) has managed, for fourteen years, to hold

the yipping, howling world at bay... Rehnquistio has shored up his legitimacy by producing narrow opinions, by avoiding sweeping activism, by rolling back federal attempts to usurp state powers...suddenly, like Lear upon the heath, Chief Justice Rehnquistio sees his delicate, glorious kingdom on the brink of collapse. The chief justice is not immune to the power of the theater. An acclaimed opera-buff, he adds stripes to his own robe after seeing the Lord Chancellor in a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's Iolanthe...Not since Marbury v. Madison has the Supreme Court stood on the precipice of erasing itself with a single stroke of the pen...

Poor Laurence Tribe. It's all Act V, Scene V, for him out there...Tribe goes head to head with Scalia on [the Florida Supreme Court's powers], and the light sabers are buzzing so hard no one can think. The one mortal moment happens when Tribe, at a rare loss, blurts: "The disenfranchising of people isn't very nice."

The court (and Rehnquist) knew it was gambling with its own legitimacy, indeed with its own legacy by taking on this case. It could have dodged the claim of being partisan by issuing a unanimous decision. It won't. It could have dodged the claim of being "activist" by refusing to take this case on the grounds of mootness, ripeness, or any number of self-abnegating Rehnquist principles. It didn't. So tonight, as we sleep,

> somewhere on a heath Rehnquistio wanders, muttering, "Why, why ... why" (Dec. 1 2000).

Mauro said about Lithwick's work: "Her irreverent tone, her candid appraisals, her impressionistic tableaus, combine to give readers a more accurate picture of what really goes on in that Court than the rest of us inverted-pyramid style dinosaurs."[7]

Not only does Lithwick's coverage of the Court and Bush v. Gore constitute a distinct approach to reporting about the Court, the case Bush v. Gore itself was a stark departure for the Court when it broadcasted the oral arguments live. However, most agree that the broadcast "was a one-time-only exception to the rules," as Mauro concluded. Current Court PIO Kathy L. Arberg said broadcasting the case was "an extraordinary situation" and said about Lithwick's work: "Not only is she covering the Court using a new medium, but she is doing it in a new way."[8]

Given reporters' frustration about the Court's desire to remain enigmatic, it is astonishing that almost half, 45 percent, of reporters surveyed said it is important for the Court to "maintain some detachment from the media and public to maintain its stature." These respondents said it is "very" or "somewhat" important for the Court to maintain that detachment.

Thus, it appears reporters have a keen appreciation for the unique needs of the judiciary compared to other branches of government. This deference may represent an understanding of the functional differentiation between the Supreme Court and other branches. It may be further evidence of their absorption into the environment in which they work and of deference for the institutional characteristics and goals of the Court.

To discern which specific sources were most valuable to reporters, a survey item asked them to rank the most commonly used sources in covering the institutions.

TABLE 1: **Source Preferences of Reporters Who Cover the Court by Rank and Score**

	Source	**Mean Score** (1 TO 5)
1	Participants in the Case	2
2	Legal Experts	2.6
3	*Amicus* Briefs	2.7
4	Syllabi	3.6
5	Oral Arguments	4

The key difference between source preferences for the two institutions is that members of Congress were ranked at the highest level for reporters who cover Congress, while reporters who cover the Court gave the words of justices (oral arguments and syllabi) the lowest possible ranking. For reporters who cover the Court, the most preferred sources were participants in cases. The Supreme Court press corps' affinity for nonparticipants was also expressed in their preferences. Legal experts were ranked second—unlike reporters who cover Congress, who ranked political experts last.

Table 2: **Source Preferences of Reporters Who Cover Congress by Rank and Score**

	Source	**Mean Score** (1 TO 5)
1	Members of Congress	1.46
2	Congressional Spokesmen and Women	2.58
3	Lobbyists	3
4	Congressional Witnesses	3.18
5	Political Experts	3.5

In the quantitative content analysis of actual news reports, reporters who cover Congress showed a pronounced reliance on Members of the Institution. Conversely, articles about the Court relied predominantly on Participants in Proceedings of the Institution and Nonparticipant Commentators. These findings support the stated preferences of reporters in the survey. Reporters relied far more on unnamed sources in covering Congress than in covering the Court. Though names were not used, their relationship to stories was identified, which allowed inclusion in the totals.

Table 3: **Frequencies of Source Usage for Reporters Who Cover the Supreme Court and Congress**

		Institution		
		Supreme Court	Congress	
Cited Sources	Members of the Institution **Category I**	90	209	299
	Staff of the Institution **Category II**	0	26	26
	Participants in Proceedings **Category III**	77	55	132
	Nonparticipant Commentators **Category IV**	195	63	258
		362	353	n = 715
	Unnamed Sources (included in above totals)	3	16	

There was remarkable parity in the overall number of source attributions. Congressional reporters cited sources 353 times in 106 stories, while reporters who cover the Supreme Court attributed 362 statements to sources. Reporters who cover the Court relied heavily on Nonparticipant Commentators in follow-up stories, which focused on impact of decisions as opposed to the decisions themselves. For example, a follow-up story on the Communications Decency Act, which appeared in The Milwaukee Journal, included thirteen citations to Nonparticipant Commentators. Such source usage affirms the assertion that reporters rely on Nonparticipant Commentators for interpretation of how Court decisions will impact the general public–as indicated by interviews with reporters and survey data.

Table 4: **Source Usage for Reporters Who Cover the Supreme Court and Congress Isolating Category IV**

		Institution		
		Supreme Court	Congress	
Cited Sources	Primary: **Categories I, II, III**	167	290	457 63.92%
	Secondary: **Category IV**	195	63	258 36.08%
		362 50.63%	353 49.37%	n = 715 100%

$x^2 = 100.543$; $p < .001$.

Cross-tabular analysis is used to examine whether source usage is related to the institution being covered. The four categories of sources are broken into two cells to help test the most explicit differences in source usage found in raw frequencies—the differences between use of Members of the Institution in Congress and Nonparticipant Commentators at the Court.

Table 5: **Source Usage for Reporters Who Cover the Supreme Court and Congress Isolating Category I**

		Institution		
		Supreme Court	Congress	
Cited Sources	Members of the Institution: **Category I**	90	209	299 41.82%
	Nonmembers: **Categories II, III, IV**	272	144	416 58.18%
		362 50.63%	353 49.37%	n = 715 100%

χ^2 = 86.646. p < .001.

Isolating these categories, the data indicate a pronounced, statistically significant difference in source usage for the two institutions.

Qualitative review of the articles revealed notable important differences. In articles about Congress, reporters were likely to provide additional interpretation of sources' comments by paraphrasing, but were reluctant to interpret statements by justices in articles about the Court. The types of stories reporters chose to write appeared to affect decisions about source usage. Stories that went beyond reporting actions of the Court and focused on the impact of decisions resulted in a strong reliance on Nonparticipant Commentators. Stories about Congress that went beyond reporting its actions were primarily features about members of Congress. Therefore, even when stories ventured beyond reporting institutional outcomes, reporters who cover Congress used Members of the Institution as the most often cited sources, and reporters who cover the Court relied on Nonparticipant Commentators.

Conclusions

Supreme Court press corps veteran Linda Greenhouse faces the challenge of effective source selection and usage regularly: "[There is] a singular feature of journalism about the Court: the impossibility of using one obvious journalistic technique for fathoming the Court's actions, that of interviewing the newsmakers themselves" (Greenhouse 1996: 1543).

Data from the findings indicate sharp differences in the use of sources for reporters who cover the Court and Congress. Findings provide support for an interpretation that the way institutions relate to the press may be understood as a result of functional needs to control dissemination of information and maintain legitimacy and power in a pluralistic political system. Quantitative data lend support for these assertions. Pronounced contingency relationship based on source usage for each institution was found in cross-tabular analysis of reporters' use of different types of sources.

This study focuses on the institutional level and how the structures of institutions may affect the work of reporters. It advances the goal of explaining and testing source usage with a cross-section of coverage and establishes source usage as a meaningful way in which to study coverage of government institutions. This study supports the notion that reporters are absorbed by the institutions they cover and that differences in source usage are a result of differences at the institutional level. Articles produced by reporters contribute toward the goals of the institutions. Source usage by reporters who cover the Court furthers the goals of unanimity, independence, distance, and immunity. If it were not for the structure of the institution and the remote posture of the Supreme Court toward the press, the vacuum of sources that reporters rush to fill with Nonparticipant Commentators would not exist: "... media reporting of public affairs is predominately, if not entirely, a response to social power configurations and acts of socially powerful elements within the system" (Tichenor et al. 1980: 235).

The approach of members of Congress to reporters is markedly more proactive than the posture of the Court toward the press. As an institution, Congress must compete with the president for coverage, as well as among and between members of Congress: "Officials who are more skillful and discreet in using the press than their colleagues can enhance reputations and garner prestige, and concomitantly enhance their ability to persuade others in the Capitol to go along with them" (Sigal 1973: 182). Justices, on the other hand, need not compete with each other for political gain through media attention. The political process between justices—bargaining for a case decision—takes place out of the sight of the public and media. The Court's unique approach toward establishing its own legitimacy through detachment appears to have a significant affect on source usage. The needs of Congress to advance political agendas may contribute to reporters' strong reliance on Members of the Institution as sources. Reporters who cover Congress are less likely to pursue sources who are removed from the political process, although such sources may provide views of political events that are less biased. Reporters who cover the Court, on the other hand, have developed a keen appreciation for the perspective that Nonparticipant Commentators bring to articles. The strong reliance on Nonparticipant Commentators comes from the need of reporters to ask questions that clarify decisions and provide insight about the implications of decisions.

Reporters seem to have little impact on the institution they cover, which brings into question the media's role as watchdog when covering the Court: "...it would be difficult to sustain the argument that journalists have any impact on what the Court actually decides" (Slotnick 1994: 260). Nonetheless, while reporters at the Court may feel less like watchdogs than their counterparts on Capitol Hill, they serve as worthy guard dogs over the institution of the Court. Supreme Court reporters do not perceive themselves as lapdogs—given the justices' reluctance to use the press to their advantage in an overt way. It is by institutional design that the reporter covering the Court acts as a guard dog. Deference to the goals of the institution reinforces the notion of a guard-dog role among reporters who cover the Court: "The guard dog metaphor suggests that media perform as a sentry not for the community as a whole, but for those particular groups that have the power...Actions of a guard dog are shaped according to the nature of the structure being served..." (Donohue et al. 1995: 116).

Reporters' strategies for covering different institutions begin with identifying sources and determining their value. Sources inside and outside government institutions have different value and utility depending on which branch a reporter is covering. These findings have implications for researchers and media professionals. The finding that source usage is affected by the structure of government institutions reinforces the theoretical weight of conflict-functionalist thought by illustrating how the goals of institutions are reflected in the news produced by reporters. Other findings in this study have implications for discourse about the public sphere. As concern about shrinkage of the public sphere grows, questions about how institutional goals affect the breadth of the public sphere and may diminish individual efficacy become more important. Further studies using larger numbers of stories and examining other aspects of content are clearly needed. Future inquiry should continue to investigate source usage that is the result of the structures of institutions as a meaningful way to explain the content of news.

The resulting differences in source usage found in this study indicate an area of inquiry that deserves enhanced application in studies analyzing coverage of government institutions. Source usage as a meaningful topic for study may also find application in research investigating other types of coverage, such as stories about government agencies. The use of sources is central to journalistic practices and constitutes an important area of inquiry for scholars when investigating newspaper articles—especially about government institutions.

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[1] Interviewed by the author Nov. 6 2001

[2] Interviewed by the author, March 14 1997

[3] Interviewed by the author July 29, 1997

[4] Interviewed by the author Aug. 11 1995

[5] Interviewed by the author April 2 1996

[6] Interviewed by the author Nov. 6 2001

[7] Interviewed by the author Nov. 8 2001

[8] Interviewed by the author Nov. 5 2001

RUNNING HEAD: ABOVE THE FOLD

Above the fold:

The implications of micro-preservation to the analysis of content importance in newspapers

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Abstract

Nicholson Baker's (2001) book detailing the micro-preservation of newspapers, *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper*, set off a firestorm of criticism among library preservationists. *Microform and Imaging Review* went so far as to devote an entire issue to a scathing review of the book (Cybulski, 2001). The foundation for the uproar is the allegation that libraries have been systematically eliminating original copies of newspapers since the 1950s and replacing them with micro-preservation media such as microfilm to save space. Neither side in the debate really directly address what "content," if any, has been lost to research in the process of micro-preservation. This paper will not address the issue of whether or not the Library of Congress, the military, and the CIA were involved in a conspiracy to eliminate original newspapers as Baker alleges. It will, however, consider what damage has been done to the single most power analytical tool available to both empirical and critical newspaper research, the content analysis. It will be argued that newspapers have worked out a scheme, more by trial and error than systematic research, to cue readers about the importance of information by leaving physical markers on the printed page. Thus, researchers can operationalize the concept of importance as physical prominence if, *and only if*, they have an original copy of the paper, or something very close to it. This issue becomes only more problematic when optical character recognition (OCR) technology is used to scan newspaper text. Finally, the problem of the online newspaper will be discussed, where the concept of an "original" becomes even more elusive.

Above the fold:

The implications of micro-preservation to the analysis of content importance in newspapers

Libraries have been engaged in a process of eliminating original newspapers from their collections for 50 years to save space and reduce costs associated with retrieval, without regard for the value of maintaining original copies as primary research sources (Baker, 2001). True, attempts are made to preserve some artifact of the original copy in a reduced form. They include reduction to microfilm or microfiche, digital photography, and the use of optical character recognition (OCR) to create electronic files. Newspapers are especially easy targets for elimination because of their bulk, the frequency of their publication, and the volatile nature of the paper on which they are printed. Some preservationists question the newspaper's importance as a primary source for historical research as a response to Baker's allegations (Cybulski, 2001).

The Argument for "De-Accession"

The librarians' argument concerning space problems is persuasive, their assessment of the fragility of pulp newsprint is open to argument, and the idea that a newspaper such as Pulitzer's *World*, that had a circulation of over one million in the 19th century (Emery & Emery, 1988) is not an important historical and cultural research source cannot be taken seriously.

The Space Crunch It is true that the cost of constructing storage space at libraries has skyrocketed. The explosion of printed information only exacerbates the problem. Many university research libraries already have committed themselves to building enormous robot-managed off-site storage centers, ceding to the notion of open public stacks. The facility at Harvard University is widely considered to be a model. While closed stacks may not be unusual in other parts of the world, this trend, called "de-assession," is symbolically important because general literacy has held such a prominent position in the notion of pluralist democracy in the United States. Library expansion projects frequently reflect the fierce competition for scarce construction money with other, more powerful, academic units. The budget pinch is only exacerbated by subscription prices research libraries face that may exceed $40,000 per year for some key scientific journals. Libraries justify the process of eliminating original newspapers and other "brittle" books with micro-copies with the claim that nothing, or at least very little, is lost.

That position, however, bates the issue of the importance of a medium's physical form to the meaning and content of the messages it embodies. Marshall McLuhan (1964/1994) may have been talking about television when he pronounced the idea that *the medium is the message*, but the principle applies to all information media. Logic dictates the simple truth that *any* facsimile is not the same thing as the physical object it represents, no matter how well rendered.

The Fragility of Pulp Newsprint A shift from printing newspapers on linen to pulp-based newsprint took place in about 1870. Newspapers printed on the new paper are an especially easy target for preservationists who warn of brittle books and "slow fires" on the selves of the libraries caused by its high acid content. Nicholson Baker (2001) makes a passionate appeal for the preservation of "a last copy of some kind" in his book on the subject. Baker founded the American Newspaper Repository in 1999 when he discovered that the only existing copies of several major U.S. newspapers were going to be auctioned off by the British Library. Later he discovered many American libraries had already done the same thing. Baker evokes the Orwellian image of libraries equating destruction to preservation when he details how tax dollars have been used to fund the elimination of irreplaceable books, newspapers, and other print media. He even alleges the CIA, the military, and the Library of Congress worked in concert to eliminate newspapers and replace them with inferior micro-preservation technologies beginning around the end of World War II. Baker argues strongly that the issue of fragility has been widely overstated by preservationists, and relates numerous personal experiences where he has encountered 150-year-old runs of newspapers in excellent condition. He argues that if newspapers are simply bound and keep flat, to seal the pages from exposure to oxygen, and kept cool and dry, their useful life goes far beyond preservationists' estimates.

The trend to replace newspapers with microfilm started in earnest in about 1950, when cellulose acetate-based film stock became available. It is important to understand that this "preservation" effort nearly always involves either the removal or outright destruction of the original. This has left researchers with microfilms as their *only* record of many American newspapers printed from 1870 to the present day. Acetate-based film, however, has a life span of only about a decade or so if improperly stored and handled. Newer 35 mm polyester based fine-grained silver gelatin emulsion microfilm with gray-scale sensitivity has come into more frequent -- but not universal -- use only since the 1980s. Even then, questions persist about the stability of the silver gelatin emulsion.

The Value of the Newspaper as a Primary Research Source What really seems to have gotten the preservationists' goat in this debate is Baker's contention libraries employed bad judgment in assessing the importance of newspapers. He contends the trend to micro-preservation was driven by the desire to secure funding for expensive micro-filming projects and to reap profits from the sale of valuable originals to private dealers, and that they violated the public trust in doing so.

Preservationists may have been lead into this misjudgment by simply underestimating the importance of newspapers as a primary research source. Cybulski (2001) for instance, argues that newspapers were never intended to be permanent records. "Nor does it seem that newspapers have been considered high priority research materials with any consistency over time," he says (p.85). That idea, of course, is preposterous on its surface to any serious communication scholar, many of whom think of the newspapers as "the first draft of history." *Any* medium that could claim the scope of penny press newspapers has to be considered as an important reflection, if not a generator, of the social fabric surrounding it. The very notion of shared cultural experience is inexorably linked to mass media. Baker (2001) says the destruction of original newspapers has resulted in "thinnings of specificity, (and) losses of groundedness" in our historical perspective of the era (p. 30).

Regardless of the arguments for or against the micro-preservation of newspapers, neither side in the debate really examines the implications to research of the loss, if any, of the original artifact. If the issue were simple text retrieval, the cost might not be that high. On the other hand, if the physical composition of the newspaper in some way conveys additional meaning to the reader beyond textual content, then the loss could be considerable.

The Newspaper Reader as Cognitive Miser

Baker (2001) only glances off the issue of the importance of the original artifact to meaning or content. "The newspaper reader proceeds non-linearly, not as he (or she) would holding a typical book, but circling around the open double-page spread, perhaps clockwise, or counterclockwise, moving his (or her) whole head as well as eyes, guided by island landmarks like photos and ads," he says (p. 25). What Baker touches on is a filtering processes going on largely below conscious awareness readers employ when they scan a daily newspaper to assess information importance. Miller, Brickman, and Bolen (1975) noted that: "It may be irrational to scrutinize the plethora of ... messages received daily. To a the extent that a (reader) possesses only a limit amount of information processing time and cognitive capacity, such scrutiny would disengage the thought processes from the exigencies of daily life" (p. 623). Readers must then act as "cognitive misers" when they decide which messages to process and which to disregard (Taylor, 1981). Newspapers are designed in large part to help readers stem this information overload and help them in the selection and appraisal process.

Building a "User Model" for Newspaper Reading. Urban life has always been complex, and information overload was a problem in the 19th century just as it is today. It has been within the context of the last 170 years that newspaper layout has evolved to deal with time and space constraints imposed by printing technology and the reader's information processing capacity. Over time editors and layout people who make newspapers have worked out a psychological "user model," largely by trial and error, of what they think a reader does with their product (Allen, 1990). This psychological model underlying newspaper design has evolved within the context of technological constraints, such as limits on column width dictated by Linotype machines, or page size as determined by printing presses. The tension between technological production constraints and the creative impulse of the designer is perennial -- it is as true for today's Web page designers as it was of the person laying out newspaper pages to be set in hot lead. Thus, there is always an interaction between what design people wish they could do and what production people are able to do. Within this context a standard emerges that is generally recognizable to the consumer and assists them in their surveillance of the environment as efficiently as possible (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Newspapers were *never* intended to be read from front to back like a book. Just the opposite, the assumption on which user models are built has been that the newspaper reader will look at only a portion of its contents. The average reader is confronted with the task of scanning a document of anywhere from 20 to 100 pages in about a half hour. The trick is, then, to construct an information interface in such a way that the reader expends as little cognitive effort as possible to the actual topic selection process, thus releasing precious resources to process the information within bounded topic areas of interest, usually called "stories." In a sense the challenge is to make the physical medium transparent, allowing the reader to become fully immersed in "content." Brenda Laurel (1991) uses the metaphor or the theater stage as an information interface when she discusses the computer, but the idea works equally well for newspapers. If a presentation succeeds in capturing the attention of the audience, then what appears on the stage (or computer screen, or newspaper page) "is all there is."

The strategy of presenting information in a form that allows the user to scan it for importance is nowhere more evident than in the "inverted pyramid" style of writing a news story, where a brief headline signals to the reader the most salient facts of a story, the story itself is summarized in its lede paragraph, etc. One 30-year veteran of United Press International commented that a lede paragraph had to capture its readers' attention in the first *three* words in order to be successful (Ebb, 1986). While that might be an overstatement, it is certainly true that wire service style, the backbone of newspaper style, is written with the assumption that many readers will look only the lede paragraph. Some will continue to read about another 200 words, or eight paragraphs, and the rest of the story may not even be read by close members of the author's family, especially if it jumps to an interior page. But story structure is only one of a number of critical physical markers that have been built into the layout of the daily newspaper as psychological heuristic devices to help readers move efficiently through its pages.

The Role of Form in Meaning Creation

Newspapers have come to look the way they do after centuries of experimentation and experience. The two most important benchmarks in the process of putting text on paper were the invention of movable type in the mid 16th century and the application of steam power to huge rotary presses in the 1830s. Along side those developments similar advances were made in the rendition of graphical and photographic images. Across this span of history newspaper layout was in large part constrained by the extant technology at any point in time, but within that framework printers and journalists came to a formula allowing them to send signals to their readers about the importance and nature of content according to a message's physical presentation. This organization of information on a newspaper page is not particularly natural; the use of the *Weekly Reader* and similar learning tools in grade schools across the generations give testament to the fact newspaper reading is a learned skill. Newspapers violate basic narrative style, which may be psychologically hardwired into the human brain (Chomsky, 1965), in accomplishing the feat of organizing content according to its importance. Lopez (1994), for instance, shows memory for news is superior if stories are organized along a traditional narrative curve, rather than according to the inverted pyramid model. That does not imply, however, that newspapers should be remade to reflect classic narrative form. The point is that newspapers came to be organized they way they are to emphasis the most salient information to the reader, while expending as little time and effort as possible, and those are constraints that do not figure in the curve described by classic narrative theory.

Thus the task of the newspaper as information interface is to move readers across the page with as little cognitive effort as possible, while cuing them to the most salient content. Current attempts at micro-preservation do not, and probably cannot, capture that dimension of the original paper and ink rendition.

Operationalizing Importance as Prominence

Importance is not a trivial concept to media studies. Core theories, such as McCombs and Shaw's (1972) notion of agenda setting, can and have been tested through content analysis of newspapers based on how and where topics are physically displayed.[1] A basic assumption of analyzing newspaper content is that the concept of importance can be operationally measured as physical prominence. Prominence can be explicated as a hierarchy of physical markers based on newspaper layout. Working from bottom to top, this scheme begins with the gross number of individual words dedicated to a topic and builds to phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, culminating, at the most frequently used unit – the story. Beyond that, stories can be measured in terms of their relative placement on the printed page and the amount of space they take up. The prominence of stories is marked by the headlines that introduce them, where their size, font, and location all serve to alert the reader to their importance. Stories can be given additional presence by the inclusion of graphics and photographs. Pages can be categorized according to the section of the newspaper in which they appear. Time units enter into the mix, where various editions within a day can be ascribed levels of prominence. Final editions are considered the most definitive. Extra runs, rendered largely obsolete by broadcast media, where especially designed to incorporate headlines and other layout devices to enhance prominence when exceptionally important breaking news events occurred. Some newspapers, such as the *Denver Post,* printed extras on a special pink newsprint to further alert the consumer to their urgency. Newspapers can vary in importance according to the day of the week as well as the time of the year. Newspaper researchers hoping to draw a representative sample run the risk of making a very big mistake if they fail to stratify according to day, week, and month.

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[1] The same case can be made for television news. How long a story is and where it appears in the newscast are clear markers of how important producers feel it is. It seems odd that libraries resist the idea of archiving at least one copy of major newspapers *somewhere*, while the Television News Archive collection at Vanderbilt University boasts a complete collection of original recordings of all the major network news programs (Vanderbilt University, 2002).

Meaning Creation Beyond Text

Berelson (1952) describes content analysis as "a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p.18). Stempel (1989) goes further to insist that *manifest content* means that "content must be coded as it appears" (p. 121). In both cases the assumption is that content is being measured within stories, that is, for the appearance of text. This approach overlooks the possibility that the physical dimensionality of the record as it originally appeared also reflects "meaning" as it relates to the psychological concept of importance. It bears repeating that this is not just an issue of the fidelity of the extant technology creating the replica, but an epistemological fact: The only original is the original and any reproduction will in some way be distance from it. While library preservationists maintain that even poor quality microfilms still render most text readable they do not address the issue of micro-preservation media's ability to capture the full physical dimensionality of the artifact.

Laying Out a Newspaper. User models work from the proposition that things that get reported on the front page of a newspaper are more important than things that appear in the style section. On the front page itself, things that appear "above the fold" of a broadsheet paper are more important than things printed below it. This is a classic example of how technological constraints interact with psychological considerations in the construction of media messages. Broadsheet papers are cumbersome to distribute and display. Thus, the last thing that happens to a newspaper as it emerges from an elaborate web rotary press is to get folded in half. Seeing that, editors adopt the convention that information "above the fold" on the front page is the most important because that is what the consumer will see through the window of the newspaper vending "rack," or on a stack at the newsstand. Most probably the story of highest importance will appear in the uppermost right hand corner of the front page. The assumption that the reader's eye begins in the upper right hand corner, however, may go against some research on the topic. For instance Biocca (1988) shows readers of the English language begin scan text from left to right, beginning in the upper left hand corner. An example of how story size and position reflect journalistic *bad* judgment about importance can be seen in the ***Washington Post*** the day Iraq invaded Kuwait in the fall of 1990. The story, which led to the largest military action carried out by the United States in the 1990s, was relegated to a few column inches at the lower right hand corner of the front page. It surely must have been a bad day for that copy editor.

The size and format of the newspaper page even conveys information about the social class of the reader. In newspapers' heyday most cities supported at least one morning and one afternoon paper. Typically the morning paper was a smaller, more manageable tabloid that was easier to read at the breakfast table, on the subway on the way to work, or on the job. The more cumbersome broadsheets, which could be read in the parlor easy chair, dominated the afternoon market. Thus, tabloid newspapers came to be associated with the working class, who read them in the morning, while broadsheets were more "thoughtful" and tended to be read by the middle class at home in the evening.

Gender as an Example. Gender serves as an example of how prominence can reflect importance in a newspaper. For instance, a study might look to see if adverbs and adjectives are used to describe female politicians according to physical attributes rather than to describe what they have to say. It might be argued that electronic renditions of newspapers generated by optical character recognition software (OCR) would serve the purpose, perhaps even facilitating it because the computer files they create are searchable. An algorithm could be devised to locate reference to specific names and then to analyze the qualifying words within a certain proximity of those names. This strategy, however, overlooks how journalists lay out papers and how users read them. The location of the references within the story may be an important marker. Information in the lede paragraph is most important, followed by information within about the next eight paragraphs, ending with the rest of the story -- with many wire service reports running a total of about 400 words. This model works from the idea that copy editors assume most readers will never make it beyond the first 200 words of most stories. The conclusion that references to physical appearance would affect the way readers think about a politician are much harder to support if they occur in the last half of the story than if they appear in the lede paragraph. Any content analysis that operationally treats text at the end of the stories as equivalent in importance to text at the being is flawed, which many do. While this error is fundamentally epistemological, constraining the researcher to text-based computer files generated by OCR software only encourages the practice.

Bower and Cirilo (1985) detail the psychological dimension of text processing, where readers actively construct meaning based on information prominence. Hall's (1980) seminal essay on encoding and decoding points out that meaning becomes “free floating” in a mass media system, and that readers may or may not recognize or accept the message creators' intended meanings. Thus, if sexist language depicting female politicians solely by their physical appearance is found to occur only at the end of stories, it is hard to make a case that such references affect the readers' evaluation of them in any important way. This is particularly important if the story jumps midway through the text to an interior page, or if the story appear in a subordinate section of the paper.

This same logic follows for story location both on the page and within the newspaper itself. What part of the paper the story appears in, say the front section versus the style section, also could provide a clue to the importance newspaper journalism gives female politicians at any point in time, and will affect the way readers assess importance when they read the story. The point is that all the cues associated with the position of the text within the physical newspaper could be distorted or lost entirely if the analysis were not carried out on a hard copy of the document.

The Practical Limits Research Based on Micro-facsimile

Why should concerns about the destruction of the original copies of a newspaper be a concern to the content analyst if a reasonable facsimile is archived in its place? Oakland, Ca. based Octavo is currently creating an incredibly high resolution copy Gutenberg Bible owned by the Library of Congress (one of only three perfect vellum copies in the world) using state of the art technologically. The Gutenberg Bible is being imaged comprehensively: the binding, end sheets, and every page (printed or not) in its three bound volumes.

"The digital result will be the most faithful, color-accurate, and detailed record possible of the original work. Because of the ultra-high resolution of Octavo's digital cameras (10,500 x 12,600 pixels), every original detail will be captured, providing the ability to minutely examine details of typography and paper surface for unparalleled scholarly investigation" (Octavo,2001).

But can even this ambitious project capture "every original detail"? Paul Needham, the Scheide Librarian at Princeton University, along with physicist Blaise Aguera y Arcas, studied Princeton's copy of the Gutenberg Bible in "near microscopic detail" and discovered letters that were long thought to have been made from pieces of type punched from the same mold lacked a degree of consistency that would be expected, and may in fact have been created using a more complex and less efficient method. They conclude from their research that the innovation of true movable type may not have been developed for another 20 or 30 years after Gutenberg's efforts, and actually took place in Italy (All Things Considered, 2002). The point here is that the necessary degree of resolution is a function of the question being asked. As exciting and cutting edge as such a Gutenberg project might sound, it still bates several important issues concerning the comparison of the original to the electronic facsimile. First, the Princeton team, who were no doubt using state of the art technology available to them at the time, admits that the images they studied did not have the resolution to render as strong a conclusion as they would like. Regardless of how good a copy of an original might be, it remains just that, a copy. Another issue deals with the authority of any given example of a printed text. Only forty-eight of the original 160 to 180 copies Johannes Gutenberg printed have survived to the present day, and only three of those are believed to be complete. Which should be considered the authoritative version? Where there differences between press runs? Deciding which copy of a Shakespearean quarto is "fair" and which is "foul" can occupy a scholar's career (see the introduction of King Lear for a discussion of variations in drafts, Shakespeare, 1988).

No librarian in his or her right mind would consider the destruction of either a copy of the Gutenberg Bible or a Shakespearean quarto simply because a state of the art facsimile existed. It might be argued that the preservation of a copy of last Tuesday's Washington Post cannot be seriously regarded in the same league as Gutenberg's Bible, but who knows? Media scholar James Beniger (1986) argues that people are rarely aware at the time of what will come to be recognized as the truly transcendental issues of their own historical moment. It seems unthinkable that a press run of Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World,* with its elegant graphics, would be destroyed or sold off to dealers, but that is exactly what Baker (2001) alleges the Library of Congress has done. Their value must surely have been less obvious the day a million copies of it were published.

Another danger of destroying original copies is that some material may be judged not warrant the effort to maintain any archival record. Take for example the search for the anonymous source "deep throat" used by Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post*, who helped bring down the presidency of Richard M. Nixon. The issue of just who "deep throat" is has puzzled and fascinated journalists and historians alike for decades. Pulitzer Prize winning investigative reporter and now professor William Gaines has spent two years along with the help of dozens of journalism students at the University of Illinois building a database to solve the mystery. His hypothesis is that "deep throat" was a well-known source to Woodward and had inevitably been named by name in his earlier work. His research strategy has been to content analyze every story Woodward ever wrote and cross reference them in the hope that a pattern will appear that points to a specific named source (Bebow, 2002). The project has involved not just the work Woodward did on stories of national importance but includes work on corruption in the Washington D.C. police force and an obscure speeding ticket controversy involving a low-level White House official. The project has go so far as to look at stories by Woodward published in the *Montgomery County* (MD) *Sentinel*, a suburban paper he worked from before joining the *Post*. Who would have imagined the *Sentinel* would emerge as an important primary historical source at the time?

The Limitations of Micro-preservation and the Damage Done

Two issue surface when the process of micro-preservation is looked at carefully, the first has to do with the extant technology employed to do the job at any point in time and the second has to do with the nature of the process itself.

A close look at micro-facsimile technology is not necessarily reassuring. Underlying the problem is the fact that whatever lavish promises promoters of the current "state of the art" technology are, they are inevitably doomed to obsolescence, and more often than not fraught with unforeseen side effects and limitations. For instance, microfilm is an analog technology and suffers from the same weakness of all analog duplication processes – their use in *any* rendition will suffer generational loss of resolution. The earliest microfilming of newspapers, dating to the 1930 and 1940s, were shot on standard motion picture stock never intended to capture high-resolution text and graphic art. Even when acetate films came into use processing quality was uneven. Now, despite preservationists' claims polyester based films have a life span of 500 years, it turns out they may have their own problems regarding sensitivity to moisture.

Microfilm life is limited by the frequency of use, and many masters are badly scratched (even preservationist admit that master copies of original microfilms too frequently are released into open circulation). Further, even if the images were clearer they simply lacked the dimensionality needed to assess the issues of information placement in a physical space on a printed page addressed earlier. Even a crisp photographic image of a newspaper does not address issues of scaling the copy to the dimensions of the original. Anyone who has ever used a microfilm reader understands the problem. Only a small portion of a page comes into clear focus, with distortion due to parallax at the edge of the lens. Even if the film holds the full page, readers are incapable of displaying the artifact as it appeared in its original form and make prominence very difficult to assess.

Even if the microfilm reader could be reinvented to display full pages, a glaring omission in the half century of micro-preservation is the absence of a metric scale in the image. Virtually every important measure of prominence in a newspaper is gauged relative to the size of the paper itself. In the absence of a scale to the side of the image estimating column inches or headline size becomes very problematic.

While microfilm and microfiche may be important media for some time, the future for high-resolution imaging is digital photography. However, this alternative is limited at a practical level because individual issues of the *Washington Post* will not receive the same attention as a copy of the Gutenberg Bible. The more likely means for the archival of large bodies of text is through the process of optical character recognition (OCR). Kanungo and Allen (1999) are engaged in a project to use OCR to archive newspapers at the University of Maryland College of Library and Information Science. A critical obstacle the project has set out to overcome is to build "an information retrieval module that applies linguistic information to aid in segmentation, indexing, and retrieval of noisy OCR'd text." In practical terms, the hope is to build software that can recognize the boundaries of stories. As ambitious as this project may sound, it still falls short of automating a process of digitizing a literal copy of a newspaper, page by page. The other obvious limitation of OCR is its inability to capture graphics and images.

The argument in favor of the process of micro archival as a substitute for the original is that acid-laden low-quality pulp newsprint is doomed anyway. But just how stable are the media used to archive them. It can be argued that many of the alternatives may be just as volatile and as newsprint. Suppose we agree that the useful life span of newsprint is 50 years. History has shown that film may not last that long, which brings the value of microfilm and microfiche into question. Ferrous oxide-based magnetic media, such as computer disks, may not be much better. Magnetic video tape has a usable life span of about a decade. The stability of optical media, such as compact disks, also have a limited useful life span before the plastic components that make them up break down. It seems ironic that the key to extending life of these new media is cool dry storage, just as it is for newsprint.

Another myth has to do with the idea that once information is digitized it becomes incorruptible (for example see Negroponte, 1995). Unfortunately, as King Lear discovered, all things are corrupted by the acid of time. Compact disks get scratch. As any experienced user of popular computer operating systems knows, digital computer files do in fact get corrupted.

The "State of the Art" as a Moving Target and the Inevitability of Obsolescence. One of the unique characteristics of a newspaper is that there is no need to employ a special technological apparatus to retrieve information from it. (The occasional stepladder used to retrieve an errant issue form the porch roof notwithstanding.) The same can't be said of most other information technologies including the list of micro-facsimile devices mentioned here, and the availability of such devices should be a real concern for those in charge of preserving newspapers. Disk readers for what used to be standard 5 1/4 inch computer diskettes in the 1980s might only be found today on an online auction on eBay as "collectables." The 3 ½ inch diskettes that replace them in the early 1990s are already being displaced by higher capacity Zip disks or optical media. The increasing pace of miniaturization in information storage technology makes backward compatibility to earlier standards harder and harder to sustain. Cybulski (2001) tacitly admits current film will not endure when he says: "The challenge now is to extend the life of acetate film through proper storage and 'migrate' the ones that cannot be refilmed." But that acknowledges that some films, for which there is no longer a hard copy, are irrevocably corrupted, and even the ones that are not have a life span shorter than the original newspapers they replaced. His challenge is disquieting because it involves a massive outlay in both time and money to redo a job that has essentially just been completed. This is further compounded by the fact that the "migration" window between emerging and obsoleting technologies grows smaller and smaller as time goes on. As mentioned, there may be only about a three-year window between computer storage media today. That means migration has to take place very rapidly or the apparatus to render the old material to the new may literally disappear.

The Dilemma Remediation There is an important distinction between conservation and preservation, where the former refers to repair or restoration of the original object and the later refers to the act of or propagating content *in any chosen medium*. The dilemma facing preservationists is that Baker's charge that the vast majority of original copies of American newspapers from the 1870 on have been destroyed and replaced by microfilm appears to be correct. This process marks a subtle but important shift in the standard activities of a library, from housing, arranging, and providing access to materials, to that of being a publisher.

This role is not likely to go away as libraries increasingly shift from paper to electronic storage media. Bolter and Grusin (1999) call the process *remediation* where "attempts are made to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation" (p. 11). If McLuhan's (1964/1994) maxim that *the medium is the message* has substance, then the act of remediation by its very nature modifies, distorts, or replaces an important component of a message's meaning. Digital convergence does cause shifts in meaning when old media become components of new media (Bolter & Grusin, 1999).

The Online Challenge Newspapers appearing on the Web only complicate the process of operationally standardizing content analysis. The strength of the HTML markup language is that it is platform independent. That means an HTML document will render on virtually any computer, regardless of make or configuration. The problem is that it accomplishes that feat by accommodating itself to the system it encounters. Thus, regardless of how well tested a Web page may be across platforms, it will be dimensionally different depending on the configuration of the system where it is displayed. This poses the problem that the message maker does not know what the user is actually seeing, and challenges the idea of transporting user models developed for the printed page to online newspapers. For instance, Reeves and Nass (1996) have shown screen size and shape affect how computer users assess the importance and credibility of information, where bigger is better. Does that mean users with large monitors will generally assess the content of online newspapers to be more credible than users with small monitors? The mutable nature of Web presentations may force newspaper designers back to the drawing board after over a century and a half to come up with some new standard, perhaps based on attributes such as text color or font, to cue readers about importance and credibility.

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Newspaper

How many news people does a newspaper need?

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How many news people does a newspaper need?

Abstract

Newspaper editors and newspaper investors see the news-editorial staff in different ways. To an editor, the staff creates the influence that makes the newspaper a viable commercial product. To an investor, the staff is mostly cost that shrinks the bottom line. We looked at more than 400 newspapers and found that those with above-average staff size (adjusted for circulation size) in 1995 were more successful at retaining circulation in the next five years. The explained variance was small but significant.

How many news people does a newspaper need?

How many news-editorial staff members does it take to produce a viable newspaper? In recent years, there has been enough variability in newspaper staffing to produce the opportunity for a natural experiment. In the late 1990s, earnings of newspaper companies soared, and staff sizes grew. Then a mild recession led to cutbacks that some feared would permanently damage their companies. Jay Harris, publisher of the San Jose Mercury, resigned over that issue.[1] In March 2002, *Editor & Publisher* reported that the end of the recession would not lead newspapers to return their staffing to previous levels. "Permanent fixed-cost reductions" would be the top priority as investor-pressured newspaper companies continued to try to improve their profit margins.[2]

While publishers recognize that news-editorial and sales jobs have something to do with a newspaper's ability to grow – or, if growth is impossible, to at least retard its decline – these categories were not immune from the recession cuts. Such decisions are difficult for managers because the value of the news-ed staff, while intuitively appreciated, is difficult to measure with any precision. Most attempts have been indirect.

Literature Review

Williamson argued that declining circulation could be remedied by improving the quality of the news product.[3] Some newspapers have demonstrated that the quality of their newspapers have enhanced their business success. Examples include the Guardian in the United Kingdom[4] and Times Mirror,[5] in addition to the Washington Post's coverage of the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate affair.[6] Recently, Lacey and Martin found that the Thompson papers lost revenue and circulation during the 1980s when high profit goals were set.[7] These cases and anecdotes show that good quality produces profit. Others have explored more specific indicators of newspaper quality for predicting the relationship between quality and circulation. Becker et al. found that staff size, starting salary, number of women on staff and type of ownership were related to newspaper performance by studying 109 daily newspapers in New England in 1973.[8] Also, Stone et al. studied 124 newspapers using an interval scale for newspaper quality. The interval scale was created by the categorical distinction between superior and inferior papers and the numerical rating established by judges' agreement. They found a positive correlation between newspaper quality and circulation.[9] In addition, Lacey and Fico found that the quality of newspapers at time one (in 1984) was positively correlated to circulation at time two (in 1985) for 106 daily newspapers. They used a content-based quality measure. The quality index included high ratio of staff-written copy to wire service and feature service copy.[10] Also, Blankenburg examined the 1986 Inland Daily Newspaper Association Cost and Revenue Study data. He found quantifiable quality-related variables—expenditures on news-editorial departments, staffing levels and number of news pages—in the data: He found that these variables were somewhat correlated with circulation in 149 newspapers.[11]

In short, several studies have found a positive correlation between quality and circulation, and a few have related staff size to quality. But the studies are old, and their samples are small. We looked for a larger data set and a direct way to detect the possible link between staff size and circulation success.

Method

To start, we need a benchmark. According to newspaper folklore, a good newspaper should one news-editorial staff member for each 1,000 circulation.

For a test of that belief against the observable world, we used the annual census of staff members made by the American Society of Newspaper Editors. These data have been collected every year since 1978 as part of the organization's goal to have minority staff reach the same proportion as minorities in the population served. The original target for reaching that goal was the year 2000, but it was later extended to 2025.

While ASNE publishes the minority percentage figures for each participating newspaper on its web site, it does not release the raw numbers from which those percentages are derived.[12] However, it did provide raw data for the years 1995 and 2000 to the senior author on condition that values for individual newspapers be kept confidential.

Our first step was to merge the ASNE data files with circulation numbers from the Audit Bureau of Circulations. Like the U.S. Census, ASNE has some coverage problems and not every member newspaper responds every year. Also, many smaller newspapers do not belong to ABC and were excluded from our study for that reason.

We made one other exclusion. The national newspapers, New York Times, USA Today, and the Wall Street Journal have economies of scale that make them potentially different from local newspapers. Dropping them left us with a convenience sample of 477 ABC newspapers that responded to ASNE in 1995 and 616 responding in 2000. We checked the 1995 sample to see if the conventional-wisdom prediction of one staff member per 1,000 circulation was accurate.

It was. The mean news-ed staff rate for 1995 was 1.04.

But there was variation around that mean. And the average grew during the ebullient prosperity of the last half of the decade. For the year 2000, the ASNE survey showed the staffing rate had ballooned by nearly a fifth: to 1.18 per thousand circulation.

And there was some variation by circulation size, suggesting modest economies of scale. We divided our sample into four circulation categories and compared news-ed people per thousand circulation in each:

	Staff per thousand circulation	
Circulation	1995	2000
0-15,000	1.15 (N=114)	1.35 (N=182)
15,001 – 150,000	1.05 (N=302)	1.15 (N=369)
150,001 – 300,000	0.86 (N=38)	0.98 (N=41)
> 300,000	0.72 (N=23)	0.81 (N = 24)

While newspaper companies prospered in this time period, the most obvious cause was their ability to raise prices in good times while newsprint prices were declining.[13] But since these trends affected everyone in the business, we wondered if there were some small increment of business success that could be attributable to editorial staff size.

Looking at the 473 ABC newspapers that reported to ASNE in both 1995 and 2000, we grouped them into three categories depending on whether they reduced or held constant news-editorial staff size in that period, increased staff by up to 10 percent, or increased staff by more than 10 percent. The distribution:

Reduced staff	35%
Small gain	23
Large gain	41

Those that reduced staff lost significantly more circulation than the others. In the 2000 ABC county penetration report, they had an unweighted mean circulation that was 93.5% of the circulation reported in 1995.[14] Those with small staff growth and large growth alike retained 97% of their five-year earlier circulation. The between-groups difference is statistically significant (F = 3.683, p = .026).

Of course, we have no way of knowing which came first: the staff loss or the circulation decline. We can make a theoretical case for one or the other as the primary cause or for a reinforcing loop where lost circulation creates financial pressure to cut staff which degrades quality and leads to further circulation loss.

But because we have measures at two points in time, it is possible to look for evidence of a primary cause.

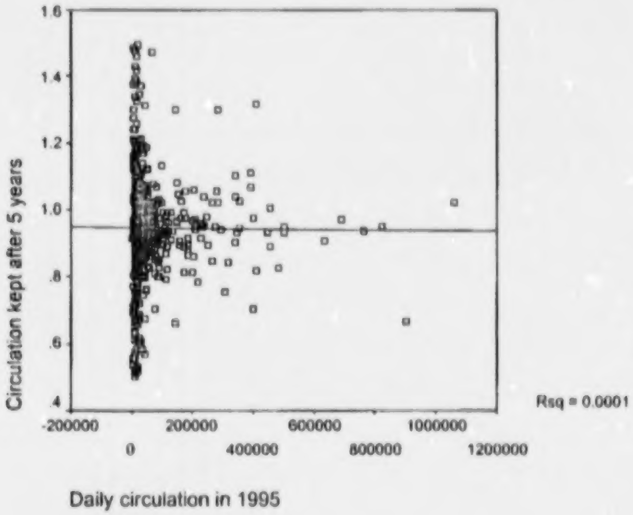
For our second look, we choose the same dependent variable, percent of `1995 circulation retained in 2000.

The dependent variable was the news-ed staff per 1,000 circulation in 1995 regardless of whether or how that figure changed in the ensuing half decade. All we need to know is whether newspapers that started the 5-year period with a more robust staff-to-circulation ratio had better results over the course of those years than those starting with less staff. Because time is one-directional, a positive result would allow us to infer that staff size is more cause than effect of healthy circulation.

A possible spurious effect is immediately suggested. Smaller papers, lacking economies of scale, will have more staff per thousand. They might also be more intimately involved with their communities and less at risk for circulation loss. If so, we should introduce a control to compensate for their lesser economies of scale.

But a look at the relevant scatter plot allays this particular fear. With extreme circulation winners and losers (> .50 in either direction) taken out for clarity, we see the scatterplot in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Five-year circulation change by circulation in 1995



We find no correlation, just the textbook case of heteroscedasticity, a funnel pattern where the smaller the paper the more susceptible it is to circulation moves in either direction. Dividing the newspapers into quadrants by circulation size gives the same revelation. Smaller newspapers, despite their greater variance, are neither more nor less likely to suffer circulation loss than their larger brethren.

With that established, we can test for the effect of staff size with a simple regression: news-ed staff per thousand in 1995 as a predictor of circulation success over the ensuing five years.

The amount of variance explained is small, 5.8%. But it is no chance phenomenon ($p < .0005$). Indeed, with so many variables working to drive down newspaper circulation in the information age, we should be surprised that the effect of staff size is a visible effect at all.

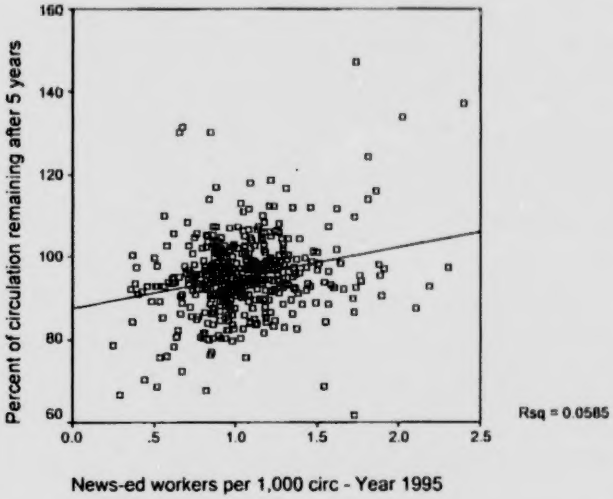
But it is. The slope of the line is 7.427, starting from a Y intercept of 87.4. In other words, a typical newspaper with a staff/circulation ratio of 1 in 1995 would expect to have held on to 94.8% of its circulation five years later (87.4 + 7.427). But if its ratio were 1.5 per thousand, it could expect 98.5% of its original circulation.

This is not unmitigated good news for newspapers. To have kept its circulation constant, our hypothetical typical newspaper would have had to increase the staff ratio by (100-87.4)/7.427.

That works out to 1.7 news-ed staff members per thousand circulation – not totally out of range, but, looking at year 2000 levels, in the top nine percent of all ASNE newspapers that belong to ABC.

Still it might be worth it if only the effect were certain. But it is only one cause in a world where many other causes are trying to crowd it out. To see what explaining only 5.8% of the variance means, it helps to look at the scatter plot.

Figure 2: Circulation held after 5 years by staff/circulation ratio



The least-squares line moves in the expected direction. Newspapers with high staff ratios in 1995 had, on the whole, better circulation success by 2000 than those that started with low staff ratios. But, as the wide scatter around the trend line reveals, other factors were pulling circulation both up and down, and a management that banked everything on news-ed staff size alone would be offering itself as a hostage to fate.

A more important message is this: the relationship between news product and business success is not zero. An enlarged news-ed staff creates benefit as well as cost. The investment analysts who see a newspaper as a platform for delivering eyeballs to advertisers in the cheapest manner possible should think about what attracts those eyeballs to the platform.

All of this makes the need for further research fairly obvious.

First, this 5-year time comparison should be carried out with more measures at more points across a wider span of time. The effects of content on circulation are sometimes immediate, as when a major story breaks, but long-term reader loyalty takes a long term to develop.

Second, this study should be replicated with controls for other influences on circulation with particular attention to the distinction between those that cannot be controlled by management, such as market demographics, and those that can, such as promotion, presentation, delivery, price, and content. Adding more controllable variables to the equation will increase management's ability to affect the outcome.

Third, if staff size makes a difference, it is important to know how deployment of that staff can enhance or retard the effect.

What we have done here is take data collected by other people for different purposes to build a natural quasi-experiment. Better answers can be attained with more data and larger scale quasi-experimentation, but the best answers must await a newspaper organization with the patience and resources to build a true experiment.

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[2] Lucia Moses, *The Jobs Aren't Coming Back*, **Editor & Publisher**, March 4, 2002.

[3] Lenora Williamson, *Circulation Drop Linked To Dull Newspapers*, **Editor & Publisher**, New York, Oct. 2, 1976.

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[6] Nancy H. Maynard, *Can Media Economics Match Its Aspirations?* **Nieman Reports**, 49(2), 1995.

[7] Stephen Lacey and Hugh J. Martin, *Profits up, Circulation Down for Thompson Papers in 80s*, **Newspaper Research Journal**, Summer, 1998.

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[11] William B. Blankenburg, *Newspaper Scale and Newspaper Expenditures*, **Newspaper Research Journal**, Winter, 10(2) 1989.

[12] http://www.asne.org

[13] Newspaper Association of America, **Facts About Newspapers – 2001**.

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New(s) Players and New(s) Values?
A Test of Convergence in the Newsroom

by

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INTRODUCTION

A challenge facing journalists at all levels in gathering today's news is convergence: the merger and fusion of once-discrete elements, work groups, processes, and values to create new entities and new realities. Either from social, economic, or technological forces — or some combination of all three — media employees and managers are finding themselves in new roles and in new relationships with one another and with audiences. In temporary, ad hoc partnerships or in more permanent arrangements, reporters and editors are likely to find themselves working closely with other staff members whose roles previously were subordinate, or did not even exist, and across traditionally rival media platforms such as print and broadcast. The latter mix is where we typically find the term "media convergence," but convergence of one form or another has marked much of news production since the early 1990s.

The recombination of workers and work groups raises the possibility of a collision of values and beliefs about the role of journalism and what journalists do and should do in covering the news. What happens to the newsroom culture's norms and beliefs when new work subgroups such as paginators and designers and Web editors rise in importance and influence, or when newspaper journalists must work with — even as — broadcast journalists? Reports from the field suggest these fusions are not always seamless meldings (Kaiser, 2000; Robins, 2000; Thelen, 2000). Newsroom managers and media scholars must ask whether newsroom disputes are merely "turf wars" or the result of fundamentally different beliefs about covering the news? Who will prevail, and with what result when the new groups are assembled? How will these be managed? These are questions that are beginning to interest scholars (Lowrey, 2001b), but as yet there is little systematic research on the effects and artifacts of media convergence. Thus, the basic research question in this study and for the field remains: How do newly empowered work subgroups influence the work culture?

A case study emerges

An opportunity to study how the infusion of new employees in newly created and newly elevated roles occurred in the re-analysis of data acquired for a study of newsroom values and beliefs. In survey research conducted in 1997 (Fee, 1999), it was noted that staff members in a newspaper newsroom showed a shift in journalistic belief systems from those reported in a similar study of the same newspaper three years earlier (Bare, 1995). In revisiting the data, the research presented here offers some of the first quantitative analysis of what happens when new worker subgroups become influential players in the newsroom.

The 1994 and 1997 studies compared attitudes and expectations among journalists on scales relating to traditional and non-traditional journalism beliefs and behaviors. Across eight belief systems (Bare, 1995, 1998; Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991), the replication data showed a general decline in constraint — a measure of how well formed a belief system is — and by examination of means on scale variables relating to the beliefs, a decline in how important journalists rated behaviors associated with these beliefs. A synopsis of this comparison is found in Appendix A.

It should be noted that at one level, the two populations studied were not equivalent, although many journalists were working in both time periods. Bare mailed his

1994 survey to 150 eligible *News & Observer* respondents and received 105 responses (Bare, 1995, p. 98). In the 1997 survey, 182 persons responded out of 223 persons who were mailed surveys to complete.

Widening the scope

The larger eligible population in 1997 is explained in part by the theoretical perspective of that research: that an organization's culture represents, is influenced by, and is performed by all members of the work organization. In this view, librarians, graphic artists, even editorial assistants, may influence the world view and craft norms of the newsroom and the content of the newspaper. People who have worked in newsrooms can attest that even a copy clerk walking by an editor's desk and saying "Nice picture" may influence the likelihood it will be published.

Taking a more traditional news-gatherer view of who shapes content, Bare mailed his 1994 survey to *News & Observer* employees "who worked as general assignment or beat reporters, copy editors, sports writers, columnists, feature writers, business reporters, photographers, supervising editors or government/public affairs reporters" (p. 96). The 1997 study was mailed to everyone who worked in the newsroom except the executive editor, an assistant managing editor and the news editor, all of whom helped plan the study under Project Reconnect, a venture of the Change Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, which was funded by the Pew Center for Civic Journalism.

New faces, new roles

The larger population of the 1997 study also is explained in part by the fact that there simply was a larger newsroom staff, organization, and mission by this time (personal communications, February 1996-September 1997). The *News & Observer* had undergone considerable change between 1994 and 1997, including the hiring of additional staff members in traditional types of jobs and the arrival of a considerable number of people in non-traditional roles created by adoption of new technology (e.g., paginators), newsroom re-engineering and the realigning of once-separated functions into the overall newsroom flow (e.g., graphic artists and librarians), and integration of new news products (e.g., web pages) requiring non-traditional job categories (e.g., webmasters). Particularly at the higher end of technology, anecdotal evidence in Raleigh and elsewhere suggests that such hiring has brought people into the newsroom who have technical skills, such as pagination or website development, needed in the modern newsroom but who are not necessarily trained in or imbued with traditional news values.

Thus, among considerations in assaying what changed in the newsrooms of 1994 and 1997 are: (1) The infusion new job classifications and work responsibilities in the newsroom, (2) growth in the newsroom staff, and (3) changes in real or perceived reward systems that could overpower the strength of the work culture.

Resilient work cultures

Against the logic of new faces and voices bringing new beliefs and values to the newsroom is a considerable literature on organizational cultures' ability to withstand change.

Organizational theory suggests that the dominant belief systems of the organization's culture are highly resistant to change, and that a new employee is socialized into those belief systems (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Kilman, Saxton, & Serpa, 1986; Lorsch, 1986). Moreover, researchers have claimed the work culture is especially strong in the newsroom because of the nature of the work (Rosen, 1995). These theoretical perspectives would suggest that the newsroom culture of 1994 would be likely to be the same or highly similar to the newsroom culture of 1997.

Although the comparison of means on the belief system variables showed change between 1994 and 1997 (Appendix A), the literature of workplace culture suggests that the strength of the newsroom culture would make it resistant to change from just the infusion of new workers and work groups alone. The research question guiding this study, then, is do new positions and new workplace power arrangements influence belief systems in the newsroom?

The literature of organizational culture suggests that the newcomers will not have that influence. Hence, H1: The new positions and new status of workgroups in the newsroom will not change the dominant newsroom belief systems. As socialization is in part a function of the amount of time there is to be socialized, a second set of hypotheses predicted that:

H2a: Older staff members will demonstrate stronger positions on journalism belief systems than younger staff members.

H2b: Those people who have worked at the newspaper the longest will demonstrate stronger positions on journalism belief systems than younger staff members.

H2c: Those people who have worked in the newspaper business the longest will demonstrate stronger positions on journalism belief systems than younger staff members.

METHOD

This research re-examined data collected on newsroom belief systems in 1994 (Bare, 1995) and 1997 (Fee, 1999). From the literature of public journalism, Bare created survey questions that asked how journalists felt about various practices and behaviors. For instance, respondents were asked the importance of newspapers helping people solve problems in the community, the importance of newspapers working with civic groups on community improvement projects, the importance of getting news to the public quickly, the importance of providing analysis and interpretation of complex problems, and so forth. The questions were used to create scale variables relating to three belief systems associated with public journalism and the three traditional journalism belief systems identified by Weaver & Wilhoit (1991, p. 15). These are:

(1) Personal Public Journalism, "beliefs representing staff members' attitudes toward personal involvement in solving community problems" (Bare, 1995, p. 102). Survey questions asked employees to tell how important it was for them in their daily work to help people in the community, solve problems in the community, work with civic groups on community improvement projects and do service journalism that helps readers solve problems.

(2) Community Trust, "beliefs representing staff members' attitudes toward trust in the community's grass-roots problem-solving efforts" (p. 102). These were "designed to determine how strongly journalists' believed that citizens and leaders in their

communities could solve local problems and elevate democratic ideals through their own actions" (p. 103). Questions on the surveys asked how strongly the employees agreed or disagreed with statements such as "the key to solving community problems is involvement from as many local residents as possible."

(3) Institutional Public Journalism, "beliefs representing staff members' attitudes toward the institutional involvement by newspapers in solving community problems" (p. 102). These were "designed to measure how strongly journalists believed their own newspapers should become involved in solving community problems" (p. 103). Questions on the surveys asked how strongly the employees agreed or disagreed with statements such as "my newspaper has an obligation to help the community find ways to solve problems" and "Those of us in the newspaper business have an obligation to use our newspaper as a tool to help improve the quality of life in our community."

And the traditional journalism belief systems (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991):

(4) Investigative/Interpretive, "investigating claims, analyzing complex problems, discussing national policy, and developing intellectual interests" (Bare, 1995, p. 114). Questions on the surveys asked employees how important it is for their newspaper to do such things as provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems, investigate claims and statements made by government, and discuss national policy while it is still being developed.

(5) Information Dissemination, "getting information quickly to the widest possible audience" (p. 116). Questions on the surveys asked employees how important it is for their newspaper to do such things as get information to the public quickly,

concentrate on news of interest to the widest possible audience, and cover hometown news.

(6) Adversarial, "being a skeptical adversary of public officials (or businesses)" (p. 113). Questions on the surveys asked employees how important it is for their newspaper to do such things as be an adversary of public officials by being constantly skeptical of their actions.

Bare also examined two other belief systems he associated with traditional journalism:

(7) Community Cynicism, "often associated with hard-boiled traditional journalists. ... [and] may be seen as a negative, if the belief is so strong that it corrupts journalists' abilities to communicate complete images of issues and of community" (Bare, 1995, p. 110). Questions on the surveys asked how strongly the employees agreed or disagreed with statements such as "When residents of my community write or call their elected representatives in Washington, it's really a waste of time" and Most folks in my community aren't smart enough to understand enough of the complicated details of local problems."

(8) Nonconsequentialism, which "would be related to the 'detached' requirement of traditional journalism beliefs. ... Detached journalists bear no responsibility for what happens after the information is delivered" (p. 110-111). Questions on the surveys asked how strongly the employees agreed or disagreed with statements such as "My newspaper should report the facts about differences among groups, but leave them alone to work out those differences" and "Our job is to highlight conflict, not resolve it."

Categorizing and Data Analysis

The same survey questions and scale variables were used in the 1997 study and thus enabled researchers to identify differences in the beliefs held in one newsroom at two points in a relatively brief time period (Appendix A). This research re-examined the 1997 data to determine whether the tailing off of constraint for the belief systems and changes in the importance journalists placed on both the comparatively new public journalism values and the traditional values could be associated with the addition or elevation of subgroups of workers. The 1997 data were examined using one-way ANOVA and Tukey's post hoc test, using SPSS for Windows 10.1.

To examine H1, standard job descriptions common to the industry, further refined by observing and interviewing in the newsroom, were used to assign employees in the 1997 survey to one of six work subgroups: Reporter, Editor, Copy Editor, Photographer, Page Designer and Graphic Artists, and Support Staff, which would include such jobs as research librarians and clerks. Web staff were placed in one of the six categories as they matched their jobs.

To examine H2a, the data were examined controlling for age in four groups: under 30 years of age, 31 to 40 years, 41 to 50, and 51 and older. These groupings generally represented 25 percent of the newsroom population each.

To examine H2b, the data were examined controlling for the number of years an employee had worked at the newspaper. More than a quarter (27.1 percent) of the staff had worked for the newspaper two years or less, and more than half (55.4 percent) had been with the paper five years or less. Staff were assigned one of four groups: two years or less with the newspaper, three to five years' service, six to ten years at the newspaper, and eleven or more years. These groupings generally represented 25 percent of the newsroom population each.

To examine H2c, the data were examined controlling for the total number of years of newspaper experience. Again sorting by percentiles, the groups were: seven or fewer years, eight to thirteen years, fourteen to twenty years, and twenty-one or more years.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the means for each of the five newsroom work groups on each of the eight variables associated with professional belief systems: Personal Public Journalism (PPJ), a five-item variable measured on a 1-4 scale; Community Trust (CT), a six-item variable measured on a 1-7 scale; Institutional Public Journalism (IPJ), a two-item variable measured on a 1-7 scale; Investigative/Interpretive (II), a three-item variable measured on a 1-4 scale; Information Dissemination (ID), a two-item variable measured on a 1-4 scale; Adversarial (ADV), a one-item variable measured on a 1-4 scale; Community Cynicism (CC), a six-item variable measured on a 1-7 scale; and Nonconsequentialism (NC), a five-item variable measured on a 1-7 scale.

Table 1: Work Subgroup Means for Belief Systems

Job	PPJ	CT	IPJ	II	ID	ADV	CC	NC
Reporter	10.5399	30.2912	9.3824	9.8382	8.1159	2.7246	15.1725	23.4559
Editor	10.8000	30.2000	8.4800	9.6800	8.3600	2.8000	15.1600	22.0833
Copy Editor	10.7667	29.5161	8.0000	9.6875	8.5938	2.9375	16.2258	25.1406
Photographer	**14.8627***	30.4118	10.8235	9.8235	8.5882	2.6471	19.2353	23.1176
Designer/Artist	9.4706	30.8000	8.6667	10.1389	7.8889	2.7778	16.3222	25.3889
Support	12.1563	31.0000	9.1333	8.7813	8.5000	2.3750	19.2625	23.8750

*F=6.500 p=<.001

The data give general support for H1, which predicted that the inclusion of new groups or the elevation in power of once subordinate groups would not change the work culture's beliefs. On only one of the eight variables, Personal Public Journalism, was a statistically significant difference found among the work groups and this was for the photographers, a work subgroup that had been included in the 1994 survey.

Table 2 shows the means for the newsroom staff on each of the eight variables associated with professional belief systems when controlled for age.

Table 2: Means for Belief Systems by Age Groups

Age	PPJ	CT	IPJ	II	ID	ADV	CC	NC
Under 30 yrs	11.1644	31.0316	9.3158	9.8553	8.3947	2.7105	16.1263	23.4737
31-40	10.8099	29.6971	8.7101	9.6549	8.2254	2.7746	16.0014	23.9571
41-50	11.1400	30.2840	9.1200	9.5306	8.3000	2.8600	16.6800	23.6020
51-and over	11.8750	31.3057	9.7500	10.1875	8.1250	2.3125	16.0625	24.6875

F=.438 p=>.05

The data do not support H2a in that no statistically significant differences were found among the four age groups, suggesting uniformity throughout the staff at all ages on each of the journalistic belief systems. Controlling for age makes the one significant difference noted previously when work role was the independent variable.

Table 3 shows means for the newsroom staff on the eight variables associated with professional belief systems when controlled for years employed at the paper.

Table 3: Means for Belief Systems by Years at the Newspaper

Tenure	PPJ	CT	IPJ	II	ID	ADV	CC	NC
2 yrs or less	10.7855	29.9458	**8.6250**	9.6809	8.3750	2.7708	16.1208	24.1250
3-5	10.5000	30.6449	8.9592	9.6900	8.1000	2.8400	15.7800	23.5850
6-10	10.9028	30.2973	**8.3611**	9.5921	8.1842	2.5526	17.1649	23.7105
11 and over	12.2927	31.1756	**10.2683***	9.9268	8.5366	2.7561	16.0976	24.6951

*F=3.388 p=<.019

The data give partial support for H2b. People who had worked for the newspaper the longest, eleven years or more, posted statistically significant differences on the Institutional Public Journalism belief system in comparison with the newest employees (working at the newspaper two years or less) and those who had worked at the newspaper between six and ten years. The longest-serving employees showed greater support for the role of the newspaper in helping the community solve its problems. They were followed by the newest, and then the next-most-veteran group. There was no statistically significant difference between the veterans and those who had worked at the paper from three to five years. Counter-intuitively, the mean difference between the most veteran staffers and the least (1.6433) was less than between the longest–tenured and the group right behind them (1.9072). Somewhat confounding, the three-to-five-year group was not shown to be statistically significant from the most-veteran group. The data gave general support but not universally, for H2b, which predicted that those people who have worked at the newspaper the longest will show the most constraint for the belief systems associated with traditional newsgathering and place more importance on the behaviors associated with them than with the public journalism beliefs and behaviors.

Table 4 shows the means for the newsroom staff on each of the eight variables associated with professional belief systems when controlled for years employed in the newspaper business.

Table 4: Means for Belief Systems by Years in Newspaper Business

Tenure	PPJ	CT	IPJ	II	ID	ADV	CC	NC
2-7 yrs	11.3351	30.8340	9.4348	9.9043	8.4043	2.7234	15.7872	23.3913
8-13	11.0714	30.7628	8.5814	89.5930	8.1395	2.7442	16.8581	23.9767
14-20	10.8431	29.2000	8.8200	9.5294	8.2500	2.9423	16.1176	24.2745
21 and over	11.1143	30.4343	9.4571	9.9143	8.4000	2.4571	16.2671	23..3286

F=.164 p=>.05

No statistically significant differences were seen on any of the eight variables when controlled for number of years the employee has been in the newspaper business. Thus, there is no support for H2c: Those people who have worked in the newspaper business the longest will demonstrate stronger positions on journalism belief systems than staff members with less time in the business.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The overall findings support the contention found in the organizational literature that the work culture of the individual newsroom is extremely powerful in socializing its members. In general, the only significant differences in beliefs and behaviors supported the overall prediction that the longer an employee has spent in his or her newsroom, the more socialized to it he or she becomes; the newsroom culture is eminently successful in socializing its members. Although the 1997 results showed a general decline for nearly all belief systems, both in constraint and importance to journalists, in this re-examination of those data no single work group of newcomers could be seen to have created the statistical result. Except for photographers, and only then for the Personal Public Journalism scale variable, there were no statistically significant differences among the work groups on any of the variables. It also should be noted that the photographers, as a work subgroup, were represented in the 1994 study, so it cannot be said that they are a new factor in the newsroom.

In examining the belief systems behind the journalistic behaviors, the findings presented here extend the seminal work of Breed (1955), who looked at acts and power relationships vis-à-vis publishers' attempts to set and maintain editorial policies. The data help to explain the uniformity and conformity among newsworkers as well as to demonstrate the long-assumed power of newsroom socialization (Breed, 1955).

Three aspects of their job may explain why photographers rated the Personal Public Journalism variable so highly. First, in their daily work photographers are more likely than any other newsroom subgroup to come in contact with the general public. The other principal news gathers, reporters, talk with sources, often officials or community leaders with whom they have continuing relationships. Photojournalists, on the other hand, are likely to cover a broader cross-section of the community and may develop greater empathy for their subjects.

A second possible answer to the photographers' scores on Personal Public Journalism is that the nature of news photography, which in a non-pejorative way might be described as the ultimate in parachute journalism. Through scheduling overload or the unpredictability of spot news, good photographers must be able to size up a situation instantly and gain entrance to the news event. Working with news photographers, one is struck by the nearly instant rapport good photographers can build with subjects. It may be that the people skills need for photojournalism predispose these news workers to a people orientation such as Personal Public Journalism.

Yet a third explanation of the apparent difference between the photographers' belief system and everyone else's is that photojournalists do their work either outside the building or, when they are in the building, traditionally have worked away from the newsroom. Although the digital age has meant they no longer spend their time in darkrooms, the production requirements and technology of the photo department nevertheless tend to isolate photographers from the work culture's influences.

While identifying similar saliencies for belief systems found in 1994, the 1997 data also suggest possible shifts in both the constraint of operative newsroom belief systems in Raleigh and in how the journalists feel about key features of their job and their readers. In this area, the data shed light on the constraint of the overall newsroom cultural norms and the work culture's ability to socialize its members, yield a newspaper whose content is uniform over time, and provide its members defenses with which to withstand pressure for change. Examining the data between the newsrooms or 1994 and 1997 suggests that changes have occurred in the work culture.

Bare (1995) selected the *News & Observer* as a progressive middle ground between the prototypical public journalism newspaper, the *Wichita* (Kansas) *Eagle*, and conservative, traditional *Omaha* (Nebraska) *World-Herald* (p. 2). Some *News & Observer* editors and staff insist that theirs is not a public journalism newspaper (personal communications, February 1996-September 1997), even though the paper has been a partner with other media in a major North Carolina public journalism initiative ("Collaborative Effort," 1996), and has adopted other features of content and coverage that are identified with public journalism.

Following the logic of the public journalism movement that traditional journalism goes against what citizens want from their media, it might be predict that infusing the newsroom with more non-reporter and non-editor staff would shift values away from the traditional journalism and more in the direction of public journalism. In fact, there is less support in this time study for either set of values than predicted.

Another possible influence is that between 1994 and 1997 there was considerable discussion in the profession about what journalism ought to be, and that and the staff attitudes have changed as a result of that discussion. For instance, in 1995 *News & Observer* managing editor Judy Bolch attended the American Society of Newspaper Editors' Journalism Values Institute, a project designed to encourage newsroom staffs to think and talk about news and community values (Ketter, 1995).

Of course, a considerable influence on creating a work-culturally homogenous staff is the hiring practices in place at a given newspaper. Managers can exert considerable control over the workplace just by the type of person they hire. It was beyond the scope of this research to examine the typology of new hires, but anecdotally is not uncommon to find newsroom managers, whether consciously or not, hiring clones of other valued staff members. It underscores the influence of managers' hiring practices in maintaining or changing cultural norms in the newsroom, such leverage can be quickly dissipated if the workplace culture is strong enough. In this regard, the comment of one news executive is particularly relevant: "You hire these people because you like them and six months later, they're entirely different people." The data here suggest that in those six months, the newsroom culture has worked its magic.

The analysis in this re-examination of the data also sheds additional light – or more questions – on research into the power-maintenance strategies of subgroups of workers within the newsroom (Lowrey, 2001b). Returning to an early question, the data presented here suggest that the differences may well be power and turf battles, not the result of fundamental differences in values and beliefs.

APPENDIX A

Tables 1a, 2a, and 3a show the reliability coefficients and means for each of the three public journalism belief systems for the *News & Observer* staff at two time periods. The comparisons offer the opportunity to speculate on directional change in the newsroom culture's belief systems.

Table 1a. Personal Public Journalism scale.

(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)

Importance of ...

Helping people in my community.
Solving problems in my community.
Improving community morale.
Working with civic groups on community improvement projects.
Service journalism that helps readers solve problems.

	Reliability	Mean
News & Observer – 1997 (n=177)	.7811	11.0829
News & Observer – 1994 (n=105)	.7306	12.5631

t=3.911, p<.05

As in the 1994 survey, the Personal Public Journalism belief system, relating to newspaper staff members' personal involvement in community problem solving, was the most constrained (i.e., well-formed) of all the belief systems tested; that is, all items in the scale were internally consistent and identifiable as a belief system (Table 1a). Interestingly, the comparison suggests that the belief system had become more constrained in the newsroom in 1997 but as a belief had less appeal, with the journalists of 1994 ranking personal involvement among the journalists in community problem solving higher than did the journalists of 1997. T-tests of independent sample means were conducted and the difference was significant at the .05 level.

For the Community Trust scale (Table 2a), Bare's setting a Cronbach's alpha level of .70 or higher as the minimum for identifying a well-formed, consistent belief system shows that the belief system is not well-formed among the journalists. However, the 1994-to-1997 comparisons showed a marked change toward strengthening the belief system.

Table 2a. Community Trust scale.

(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)

Local business leaders should take positions of leadership in the effort to solve problems in my community.
Local residents who attend city council meetings and stay abreast of local issues can help improve the quality of life in the community.
Improving local schools is the key to solving problems in my community.
The key to solving community problems is involvement from as many local residents as possible.
Church organizations and local religious leaders will have to have input in order for problems in my community to be solved.
Most people I know in the community are pretty energetic and bright and could probably solve lots of problems if it weren't for such a complex bureaucracy.

	Reliability	Mean
News & Observer - 1997 (n=176)	.5397	30.2697
News & Observer - 1994 (n=105)	.3902	31.0326

t=1.632, p>.05

Although the Community Trust belief system (Table 2a) was not found to be constrained in either group and was much less so among the earlier group, the scoring on this variable for the two groups was examined and t-tests were conducted. While the difference was not statistically significant at the .05 level, the 1994 cohort was seen to value citizen efforts in community problem solving slightly more the journalists of 1997.

Neither group produced sufficiently high alphas to identify Institutional Public Journalism (Table 3a) as a constraining belief system, although the alphas .6702 for the journalists in 1994 and even .6374 in 1997 are suggestive, indicating that the Institutional

Public Journalism belief system appears to have given ground in the newsroom between 1994 and 1997.

Table 3a. Institutional Public Journalism scale.

(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)

My newspaper has an obligation to help the community find ways to solve problems.
Those of us in the newspaper business have an obligation to use our newspaper as a tool to help improve the quality of life in our community.

	Reliability	Mean
News & Observer - 1997 (n=174)	.6374	9.0517
News & Observer - 1994 (n=104)	.6702	10.9902

$t=5.984$, $p<.05$

If Institutional Public Journalism (Table 3a) cannot be seen as a constrained belief system for either group, it is weaker among journalists of 1997, for whom the belief system was less well-formed than the journalists of 1994. The earlier group also showed a greater tendency to see the newspaper as a player in community improvement. T-tests of independent sample means were conducted and the difference was significant at the .05 level.

Tables 4a and 5a show results of constructing scales for what Bare (1995), following Weaver and Wilhoit (1991), identified as questions relating to traditional journalism values. The data show the Investigative/Interpretive value to be the second-strongest belief system of all those investigated, and the degree of constraint nearly reaches Bare's requisite .70 (Table 4a). Interestingly, the data show decline in the belief system's constraint among the 1997 journalists, although they indicate a moderately constrained belief that it is the job of journalism to investigate, analyze, and interpret the world for readers. T-tests of independent sample means were conducted and the difference was not significant at the .05 level. The means suggest, however, less support for such efforts among the journalists of 1997 than in 1994.

Table 4a. Investigative/Interpretive scale.

(1=Not really/4=Extremely)
Important for newspaper to ...
Provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems.
Investigate claims and statements made by the government.
Discuss national policy while it is still being developed.

	Reliability	Mean
News & Observer - 1997 (n=174)	.6839	9.7216
News & Observer - 1994 (n=105)	.7551	10.2190

t=1.948, p>.05

Among the three newsrooms he studied, Bare found only weak correlations for the traditional Information Dissemination value (Table 5a) of "getting information quickly to the widest possible audience" (Bare, 1995, p. 116), and alphas for this value in each of the three newsrooms were not "remotely close to the .70 threshold, indicating that these attitudes are much less consistent and less constrained ... than the Investigative/Interpretive beliefs" (p. 128). In the present study, the alpha produced by the newsroom was considerably lower than even the 1994 research, indicating an even sharper de-emphasis of the traditional journalistic values of timeliness or mass appeal or both.

Table 5a. Information Dissemination scale.

(1=Not really/4=Extremely)
Important for newspaper to ...
Get information to the public quickly.
Concentrate on news that is of interest to the widest possible audience.

	Reliability	Mean
News & Observer – 1997 (n=176)	.2392	6.2938
News & Observer – 1994 (n=105)	.4284	9.5905

t=-2.387, p<.05

Thus, for the journalists the belief system is not well formed and is less important in their work than other aspects, with a considerable change in this direction noted over four years.

The scores for the single-item Adversarial measure, shown in Table 6a, were examined using the t-tests for independent means and were found to be significant at the .05 level. The data show that from 1994 to 1997, it few more important in the newsroom for the media to be constantly skeptical of public officials.

Table 6a. Adversarial belief.

(1=Not really/4=Extremely)
Important for newspaper to ...
Be an adversary of public officials by being constantly skeptical of their actions.

	Mean
News & Observer - 1997 (n=171)	2.7401
News & Observer - 1994 (n=91)	2.5922

t=6.564, p<.05

Tables 7a and 8a report on the traditional belief systems of Community Cynicism and Nonconsequentialism. Interesting differences are seen in the journalists of the two studies. Although none reach the requisite alphas as established by Bare, the Community

Cynicism belief system (Table 7a) is seen to be more strongly constrained among the citizens of 1994 than among the 1997 cohort. Although neither group achieved the alpha level for a fully-constrained belief system, and the difference was not found to be significant at the .05 level, the mean score for the 1997 group suggested they were more positive than the journalists of 1994 about the ability of the citizen to make things work in society.

Table 7a. Community Cynicism scale.

(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)

It's good that residents of my community vote, but elections don't really change anything.
When residents of my community write or call their elected representatives in Washington, it's really a waste of time.
It's impossible to solve all the complex problems in my community. Things have gone too far.
Time constrains and other job pressures make it impossible for reporters at my newspaper to consistently produce stories that will bring about positive changes in the community.
Most folks in my community aren't smart enough to understand enough of the complicated details of local problems.
Low voter turnout may be a sign that residents are satisfied with the status quo and don't feel a need to make changes.

	Reliability	Mean
News & Observer - 1997 (n=176)	.5811	16.2381
News & Observer - 1994 (n=105)	.6649	24.3367

t=-,083, p>.05

Among both cohorts of journalists, the Nonconsequentialism, "detached journalist," belief system was not well-constrained at all (Table 8a), but here the more startling finding was the degree to which constraint had fallen off in the newsroom between 1994 and 1997. T-tests of independent sample means were conducted and the difference was significant at the .05 level. While not recognizable as a well-formed belief system, however, the means suggest a greater inclination among the 1997 journalists to see journalism as responsible for what happens to the people, issues, and events that they write about and possibly more willing to engage in the behaviors associated with public journalism.

Table 8a. Nonconsequentialism reliability scale.

(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)

My newspaper should report the facts about differences among groups but leave them alone to work out those differences.
My newspaper should try to help people with different interests and ideas to understand one another.
Our job is to highlight conflict, not to resolve it.
The best journalism is neutral journalism.
The newspaper should be a watchdog, not a discussion moderator

	Reliability	Mean
News & Observer - 1997 (n=175)	.2515	23.7800
News & Observer - 1994 (n=105)	.5644	21.0204

t=-4.473, p<.05

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Newspaper Editors' and Educators' Attitudes About Public Trust, Media Responsibility and Public Journalism

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Newspaper Editors' and Educators' Attitudes About Public Trust, Media Responsibility and Public Journalism

Abstract

The authors surveyed educators who belonged to the Newspaper Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication and editors of daily newspapers to find out whether they had a similar level of concern about public mistrust of the media and government as well as similar attitudes about the need to improve media responsibility and the importance of public journalism as a means to increase media credibility. The authors concluded that the two groups had similar concerns about public trust and media responsibility, and both groups saw public journalism as a potential means for improving media credibility. Educators, however, were significantly more likely to state that the media are contributing to the public's mistrust of government, that responsibility shown by daily newspapers is worse than it was five years earlier, and that public journalism reduces a media organization's objectivity. The authors present suggestions for what the findings mean for journalism educators.

Newspaper Editors' and Educators' Attitudes About Public Trust, Media Responsibility and Public Journalism

Public trust in the news media has been cause of concern for U.S. media in recent years. The 2001 First Amendment survey by the Freedom Forum (http://www.freedomforum.org) found, for example, that almost as many Americans say they believe it is important for the government to hold the media in check (71%) as say they believe it is important for the media to hold the government in check (82%) (Paulson, 2001).

Moreover, 41% of Americans surveyed by the Freedom Forum said they were more concerned about the media having too much freedom than about the government imposing too much censorship, and only 36% said they were more concerned about government censorship than they were about media having too much freedom.

Such numbers suggest that support is weak for the media-related freedoms set forth in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees Freedom of Speech and Press as well as Freedom of Religion and Assembly and the right to petition the government.

Kovach, Rosenstiel & Mitchell (1999) stated about the situation that "a large majority of news professionals sense a degradation of the culture of news – from one that was steeped in verification and a steadfast respect for the facts, toward one that favors argument, opinion-mongering, haste, and infotainment."

Falling U.S. media credibility in the past few years has led media researchers to study the cause of the rise in public distrust for the news media and has led U.S. media educators to rethink the foundations of journalism education.

Surveys show that public trust for the media has been on the decline for years. Public opinion surveys in the early 1980s were showing that U.S. newspapers were losing credibility with readers and that a "credibility gap" was developing (ASNE, 1985; Times Mirror, 1986). The two major U.S. newsroom organizations, the American Society of Newspaper Editors (http://www.asne.org) and the Associated Press Managing Editors Association (http://www.apme.com) established "credibility committees" to study the problem (Gaziano, 1988).

A survey a decade later (Hess, 1996), however, showed that public distrust for the media was continuing to fall. Also, a Gallup poll in the late 1990s found that more Americans perceived the media to be biased than perceived them to be fair and impartial – around 55 percent to 45 percent across the various media (Newport & Saad, 1998).

In a study commissioned by Newsweek magazine (Nicholson, 1998), 76% of Americans surveyed said the news media had gone too far in the direction of entertainment and away from traditional reporting. Overall, 53% of respondents said they believed "only some" or "very little" of what they see, hear or read in the news media. In addition, the credibility rating of all types of news media surveyed had fallen significantly from a poll taken in 1985. The percent of people stating that they believe all or most of what is in network television had fallen to 22% from 32%, and the percent of those believing all or most of what is in the local newspaper had fallen to 21% from 28%. Only 33% of Americans stated that journalists were more influenced by a desire to report the news fairly and accurately

Likewise, a survey by the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE, 1998) found that "Americans are coming to the nearly unanimous conclusion that the press is biased, that powerful people and organizations can kill or steer news stories, and that newspaper accuracy is no longer a given" ("Papers Alienating Readers," 1998).

More recent research, however, suggests that the decline in credibility may be slowing. Stepp (2001) found that two thirds of Americans surveyed thought news stories were "very biased" or "somewhat biased" and slightly more than two thirds stated that newspapers should do a better job of explaining themselves. However, only 12 percent of Americans thought that the news reporting in the local paper they read most often was less believable that it was "several years ago." About 70% of Americans thought it was "about the same."

To stop the slide in media credibility, the Newspaper Association of America (http://www.naa.org) and the American Society of Newspaper Editors (http://www.asne.org) looked at ways to improve media performance. In 1997, members of the news industry and allied foundations began three efforts to find ways to improve media performance and public support, at the cost of millions of dollars: the Journalism Credibility Project (ASNE, 1997), the Committee of Concerned Journalists (http://www.journalism.org/ccj), and the Free Press/Fair Press Project (Hess, 1998). The work of the Committee of Concerned Journalists led to a list of nine principles thought to be basic to journalism (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001).

At the same time that concern over the U.S. media's "credibility gap" was increasing, some professional journalists began to look at "community connectedness" as a means for increasing both newspaper readership and citizenship through the journalistic tradition of public service. Rosen (1993) stated that community connectedness meant "that journalists must play an active role in supporting civic involvement, improving discourse and debate, and creating a climate in which the affairs of the community earn their claim on the citizen's time and attention" (p. 3).

In 1994, the Pew Charitable Trusts (http://www.pewcenter.org) began funding "civic" or "public" journalism projects as an "antidote to cynicism" (Knecht, 1996). Glasser and Craft (1996) wrote that public journalism has two sets of principles. First, it "rejects conceptions of objectivity that require journalists to disengage from all aspects of community life" and, second, it "calls for a shift from a 'journalism of information' to a 'journalism of conversation'" (p. 154). Craig (1996) stated that the movement seeks to "foster new ties with the public, spur debate over community problems and solutions, and energize citizens to participate in public life" (p. 115).

Some journalists and journalism educators began to see public journalism as a way not only to increase readership but also to close the credibility gap. Altschull (1996), for example, suggested that the aims of supporters of variants of public journalism and journalists looking to improve media credibility share common ground. He concluded that public journalism "marks a serious effort to return journalism to the reputation it once had" and "to restore the role of the press to its original purpose – that is, to serve as a breeding place for ideas and opinions, a place worthy of elevation to the honored position it was given in the First Amendment" (p. 167).

The extent to which public journalism is an antidote for public distrust of the media and the government is a question of importance both for journalism professionals and for journalism educators. Anderson, Dardenne, and Killenberg (1996) suggested that public journalism's appeal is "at least as wide as public cynicism with present media practices is deep" (p. 165). If that is so, journalism educators not only in the United States but also in other countries need to understand its implications and consider how it can be incorporated into the classroom.

Review of the Literature

The hypothesis that a growing lack of credibility of newspapers was related to the loss of readership was a "popular hypothesis receiving attention in the 1980s" (Meyer, 1988, p. 576). Several academic studies also were undertaken in the mid- and late-1980s and early 1990s to try to measure credibility (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986; Rimmer and Weaver, 1987; Meyer, 1988; Wanta and Hu, 1994).

One study found that journalists were becoming considerably more critical of their profession and concluded that neither journalists nor media executives understood their audience well (Kovach, Rosenstiel, & Mitchell, 1999).

Public journalism entails more reader/audience input into news media content and is thought to lead to an increase in non-expert sources. One study of a public journalism project (Reynolds, 1997) found no change in the use of non-expert sources used, however, and a study of another public journalism project (Massey, 1998) found that the number of non-expert sources was about equal to the number of expert sources used. Haas (2001) concluded from a study of one apparently successful public journalism project that the newspaper's sources were bifurcated: with non-expert sources providing personal anecdotes and expert sources providing technical information.

In addition, some researchers have questioned whether public journalism will reduce or increase public cynicism. Iggers (1998) suggests that the media's encouragement of the public to participate in discussion on public issues "in a context where there is little prospect that the conversation will have an impact runs the risk of deepening public cynicism toward government and politics" (p. 150). Parisi (1998) wonders whether public journalism might be "hegemonic – a means of accommodating the contradictions of current newsgathering without bringing about genuine change" (p. 682).

Voakes (1999) proposed four dimensions (or indicators) of civic journalism: enterprise; information for decision making; facilitation of discourse; and attention to citizens' concerns. The first two, which Voakes called modest approaches, might better be seen as traditional journalistic approaches. The last two he called bold approaches. Kurpius (2000), on the other hand, stated that approaches to public journalism are "spread along a broad continuum" (p. 341).

Bare (1998) concluded that institutional public journalism beliefs, as well as more conventional belief systems (such as Investigative/Interpretive Journalism), were more important than a journalist's personal public journalism beliefs. Gade et al. (1998) used a Q sort to identify four types of journalists: the Civic Journalist, who believes the media should be more involved in making democracy work; the Concerned Traditionalist, who believes it is not the media's responsibility to make sure democracy works; the Neutral Observer, who believes that journalists should remain objective and not let the public's demands set the media's agenda; and the

Responsible Liberal, who sees the media's role as identifying issues and problems for the public and who supports the ideals of objectivity and social responsibility.

Some research has looked at attitudes toward public journalism. Ketchum (1997) found that slightly over half of print and broadcast journalism executives agreed with the following statement: "For many news organizations, 'civic journalism' has become an important means of enabling them to 'reconnect' with their alienated communities by paying much more attention than they have in the past to what people think." Half of the media executives agreed that "Having newspapers sponsor and conduct 'citizens' forums,' at which those in the community can discuss issues of importance to the public, usually results in better reporting of community issues."

Arant and Meyer (1998) determined that U.S. daily newspapers of all sizes were using public journalism practices but that most journalists practiced traditional journalistic values and did not support public journalism values that differed from those traditional values. On the other hand, journalists who supported basic public journalism practices were no less sensitive to traditional ethical issues than were journalists who were not supporters of public journalism.

A recent study (APME et al., 2001) found that 45% of editors surveyed reported that they used civic (or public) journalism techniques. More editors ranked public journalism-related techniques of "conversation catalyst" and "community steward" as the highest value for a newspaper than the number who ranked the newspaper's investigative role highest.

A little research has compared editors' and educators' attitudes toward public journalism. The St. Louis Journalism Review conducted a national study of U.S. newspaper editors and college journalism educators about public journalism (Corrigan, 1997). Researchers found that 71% of the 143 editors responding and 86% of the 184 educators responding were "very familiar" or "somewhat familiar" with public journalism. They concluded that there was "obvious concern, and division, over any journalistic concept that lessens the importance of the 'watchdog' role of the press" (p. 15). The researchers, however, combined responses by educators and editors and did not compare the two groups' responses.

As Hass (2000) noted, little research has been done on U.S. journalism educators' attitudes toward public journalism. Haas and Steiner (2001) investigated the supposed gap between scholarship about public journalism and its practice and concluded that academic scholarship does offer pragmatic guidelines for journalism professionals practicing public journalism.

This study was undertaken as a preliminary step toward understanding journalism practitioners' and journalism educators' attitudes toward public journalism as it relates to public trust. Such an understanding is important in helping educators improve journalism education by increasing students' understanding of techniques that might improve their performance and, it is hoped, media credibility.

Method

Because no list of educators involved in newspaper journalism education in the United States was available, the authors surveyed a random sample of members of the Newspaper Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. We thought they would be the educators who were most knowledgeable about newspaper journalism education. Because we thought some members of the division might not be involved in journalism education, we asked respondents who did not teach journalism courses or did not feel themselves to be sufficiently knowledgeable about newspaper journalism education in the United States to return the survey after putting a check in the appropriate blank.

We sent surveys to a random sample of 383 AEJMC Newspaper Division members, almost 60 percent of the approximately 650 division members. We also sent surveys to a random sample of 501 daily newspaper editors, one third of the approximately 1,500 U.S. daily newspapers. We also sent follow-up letters to try to obtain the best response rate.

We proposed three research questions:

RQ1: What is the attitude of the U.S. daily newspaper editors and newspaper journalism educators about the level of public trust in the media and in government?

RQ2: What is the attitude of U.S. daily newspaper editors and newspaper journalism educators about media responsibility?

RQ3: What is the attitude of U.S. daily newspaper editors and newspaper journalism educators toward public journalism?

Respondents were asked three questions concerning each research questions. For each statement, they used a 1-to-5 scale with 1 meaning "disagree strongly," 2 meaning "disagree somewhat," 3 meaning "undecided," 4 meaning "agree somewhat," and 5 meaning "agree strongly." To analyze responses relating to the three research questions, we used t-tests for independent samples to identify statistically significant differences between editors' and educators' responses. We used the 95% confidence level as the measure of statistical significance.

We received responses from 167 AEJMC Newspaper Division members (44%) – of which 142 submitted a completed survey and 25 noted that they did not teach journalism-related courses or were not sufficiently knowledgeable to respond.

We also received responses from 149 newspaper editors (30%). The response rate from editors was somewhat lower than desired; however, based upon results achieved by other researchers, it was not unexpected. Editors at newspapers with less than 25,000 circulation were somewhat over-represented in the sample, and editors from newspapers with more than 100,000 circulation were somewhat under-represented. We did not see that as a major problem, however, because we found no statistically significant difference between editors' responses for any question based upon newspaper circulation and because the literature suggested that more public journalism activity was taking place at smaller newspapers.

Findings

To determine whether editors and educators had similar concerns about the level of public trust in the media, we asked three questions: the extent to which the media were creating public mistrust, whether media credibility should be of concern to the media, and the extent to which they thought media credibility and public trust in the media were related. Responses to questions concerning the Research Question No. 1 are shown in Table 1.

Whereas editors were undecided overall whether the media were contributing to the public's mistrust of government, educators agreed somewhat with the statement. The t-test indicated that educators were significantly more likely than editors to agree that the media were contributing to the public's mistrust of government.

Both groups surveyed agreed strongly that the level of public mistrust should be of concern to the media. Also, their responses were near the upper limit of "agree somewhat" category in regard to the statement that loss of media credibility is reducing public trust. Both editors and educators were slightly more likely to state that the level of mistrust should be of concern to the media than they were to state that the loss of media credibility is reducing public trust in the media. We found no statistically significant difference in editors' and educators' responses to those two statements.

To determine respondents' attitudes toward media responsibility, we looked at the extent to which they thought media responsibility was declining and whether they thought the media should be more responsible. Responses concerning Research Question No. 2 are shown in Table 2.

Though both groups were undecided overall about whether responsibility shown by daily newspapers was worse than five years earlier, educators were significantly more likely than editors to state that the responsibility shown by daily newspapers was worse than it was earlier. Both groups agreed somewhat that responsibility shown by television news was worse than five years earlier and that the media should be more responsible in reporting. We found no statistically significant difference in the two groups' responses concerning those two statements.

To determine their attitudes concerning public journalism, we asked whether they thought public journalism reduces media objectivity and improves media credibility and reader interest in the news media. Responses concerning Research Question No. 3 are shown in Table 3.

Although both groups of respondents were undecided about whether public journalism reduces a media organization's objectivity, editors were leaning toward "disagree somewhat." Editors were slightly more in agreement with the statement that public journalism was a good means to improve credibility and that it increases reader interest than were educators, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Discussion and Conclusions

The first research question concerned the attitude of the U.S. daily newspaper editors and newspaper journalism educators about the level of public trust in the media and in government. Editors and educators disagreed to some extent about the level of public trust. We found that they have similar levels of concern about the media losing public trust, but not about whether the media are causing public mistrust of government. Educators were more likely than editors were to state that the media are contributing to mistrust of the government. The issue strikes closer to home for editors, and they may be somewhat more biased on that issue.

The second research question concerned the attitude of U.S. daily newspaper editors and newspaper journalism educators about media responsibility. The two groups showed some disagreement. Editors and educators agreed about the need for the media to be more responsible. They also agreed that TV news had become less responsible. Not unexpectedly, perhaps, editors were less likely to state that newspapers had become less responsible. Again, editors likely are too close to the issue to be unbiased in their responses about their own medium.

The third research question concerned the attitude of U.S. daily newspaper editors and newspaper journalism educators toward public journalism. We found no statistically significant difference between editors and educators for any of the three statements. Editors, however, appeared to be slightly more supportive of public journalism. Educators were slightly more likely to state that public journalism reduces objectivity, and editors were slightly more likely to state that it was a useful tool to improve media as well as increase reader interest.

Editors' and educators' high level of agreement in attitude and concern, perhaps, should not have been unexpected. Research has shown that most newspaper journalism educators have professional newspaper experience and likely carry over many attitudes to their teaching. The two areas of disagreement shown on Tables 1 and 2 also are not unexpected. Educators would be expected to be somewhat more objective when looking at the media from outside than current editors would be looking at the media from the inside. The almost identical rating editors and educators gave for the level of responsibility shown by TV news suggests that editors also tend to be more objective about something in which they are not directly involved.

The high level of agreement on questions concerning public journalism was less expected but understandable based upon what we found concerning their acquaintance with public journalism. Nearly three fourths (73%) of the editors stated that their newspapers had participated in at least one civic/public journalism project or activity within the previous five years. Whereas 27% of them stated that their newspapers had undertaken one or two such projects during that time, 12% had undertaken three, and 34% had undertaken four or more.

Educators showed a similar high level of acquaintance with public journalism. Most of those responding (69%) stated that civic/public journalism was a topic for discussion in one or more courses at their institution, and 15% stated that it was taught as a journalistic technique in one or more courses. The other 16% stated that it wasn't discussed. A small minority of the educators responding, 12%, stated that their journalism program had a specific course whose major focus is civic/public journalism.

That editors are slightly more likely to disagree somewhat with the statement that public journalism reduces objectivity likely is related to their own experiences in actually doing public journalism. It also is interesting for the purposes of this study to note that the two groups' level of support for public journalism as a means for improving media credibility is only slightly less than their support for public journalism as a means for increasing reader interest – it original purpose.

This study suggests that media credibility is a concern for newspaper editors and newspaper journalism educators and that they think public journalism might be one means for improving credibility. Certainly, media educators need to educate their students about the causes of public distrust of the media and ways media credibility might be improved. One such means might be integrating as least some aspects of public journalism into the curriculum.

Studies have shown that the reasons the public tends to mistrust the news media are many: They believe that the media are more interested in higher ratings and profit than news, that they are too powerful; that they are interested in personal fame; that they focus on scandal and "infotainment"; that they are too liberal (or too conservative); and that they are insensitive, biased, inaccurate, unfair and cynical. Some of the criticisms are, perhaps, accurate. Whether accurate or not, all of these concerns need to be addressed by the media and by journalism educators. Certainly, students' understand of "The Elements of Journalism" proposed by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001) are important in that regard.

The study also suggests that U.S. editors and educators remain somewhat leery of public journalism, particularly in regard to the extent to which it is perceived to reduce journalistic objectivity. However, framing research and agenda-setting research suggest that journalists are perhaps less objective than they suppose. If journalists are more aware of how they frame their stories and set the public agenda, they are more likely to try to keep their stories fair and balanced.

When journalists state worries about public journalism's impact on objectivity, their concerns may relate more to having to share agenda-setting duties with the public. If readers, listeners and viewers can make a connection with the news media, they are less likely to perceive journalists inaccurate, biased and aloof.

Educators need to teach students about the causes of media bias as well as causes of the public's perception of media bias in order to prepare them for media jobs. Why, for example, do readers/viewers think that powerful people can kill news stories, that the media are too liberal (or too conservative), and that the media can't be trusted? And are the media inaccurate? If so, what can be done about it? In addition, educators might integrate aspects of public journalism and public connectedness into their courses.

Journalists in the United States have long been seen as arrogant because of the protections offered them by the First Amendment's grant of Freedom of Speech and Press. The media also have been perceived by the public as kowtowing to big business because of chain ownership of most newspapers and the takeover of the major broadcast networks by large corporations. Journalism education has an important role in helping future journalists understand the causes of public distrust as well as the possible solutions.

Some consensus may be evolving that the tools of public journalism may be potentially useful in reducing the level of public mistrust of the media and, perhaps, mistrust of the government. The tools that have been suggested by public journalism advocates include understanding the community and listening to readers. Though those are things that journalists will say they always have done, the techniques being developed through public journalism initiatives offer additional means of increasing reader input. Such techniques may not only be increasing reader interest in the news and the community but also may be assisting in improving some of the credibility that the media in the United States appear to have lost.

Debates over media responsibility and the role of public journalism offer journalism educators opportunities to play an important role in improving journalistic practices. It is, of course, an important role of journalism education to seek to improve professional practice. Journalism educators can lead the way in improving young journalists' sensitivity to the need for public trust while at the same time educating young journalists about the consequences of media sensationalism. Journalism educators should work to produce future journalists who will provide leadership in helping to overcome public cynicism and mistrust of the media while fulfilling their responsibility for public service.

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Table 1

Results of t Tests for Respondents' Level of Concern About Public Trust

	Editors	AEJMC	t	p
Media are contributing to public's mistrust of government	3.42	3.83	-2.94	.004**
Level of public mistrust should be of concern to media	4.60	4.58	0.24	.810
Loss of media credibility is reducing public trust in media	4.44	4.43	0.12	.901

Note: Judgments were made on a 5-point scale: 1 = disagree strongly; 2 = disagree somewhat; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree somewhat; 5 = agree strongly. Editors: N = 149; AEJMC: N=142.

**Significant at .01

Table 2

Results of t Tests for Respondents' Attitude Toward Media Responsibility

	Editors	AEJMC	t	p
Responsibility shown by daily papers worse than 5 yrs. ago	2.73	3.17	-3.08	.002**
Responsibility shown by TV news worse than 5 yrs. ago	4.12	4.07	0.43	.670
Media should be more responsible in reporting	4.02	4.05	-0.26	.793

Note: Judgments were made on a 5-point scale: 1 = disagree strongly; 2 = disagree somewhat; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree somewhat; 5 = agree strongly. Editors: N = 149; AEJMC, N = 142.

**Significant at .01

Table 3

Results of t Tests for Respondents' Attitude Toward Public Journalism

	Editors	AEJMC	t	p
Public journalism reduces media organization's objectivity	2.68	2.96	-1.81	.072
Public journalism a good means for media to improve credibility	3.60	3.41	1.50	.135
Public journalism increases reader interest in news media	3.75	3.58	1.36	.176

Note: Judgments were made on a 5-point scale: 1 = disagree strongly; 2 = disagree somewhat; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree somewhat; 5 = agree strongly. Editors: N = 149; AEJMC: N = 142.

The non-linear Web story:
An assessment of reader perceptions, knowledge acquisition and reader feedback

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The Non-Linear Web Story: Assessment of Perceptions, Knowledge Acquisition and Feedback

In recent years pundits in the online news industry have been calling for greater innovation in the production and presentation of Internet news stories for both print and broadcast sites (e.g., Anzur, 2001; Outing, 2000, Chan-Olmstead and Park, 2000; McAdams, 2000). They say Web news stories should offer more opportunities for audiences to interact with journalists (Lanson, 2000; Kiernan and Levy, 1999; Rich, 1999; Ha and James, 1998), should provide users with greater control over navigation (Nielsen, 2001; Lanson, 2000; Scanlan, 2000; Black, 1998) and should offer users both brief and encyclopedic information (Lanson, 2000; Scanlan, 2000; Garcia, 1998). Some academics in journalism advocate instructing students in non-linear narratives (e.g., Huesca, 2000). Textbooks for the Web (e.g., Rich, 1999; Farkas and Farkas, 2002), and industry think tanks such as the Poynter Institute offer instruction for the production of "non-linear" Web news stories.

"Non-linearity" has become a buzzword in the news industry, but the term is conceptually fuzzy. Generally, industry pundits assume non-linear stories to be those that offer users control over the sequence of story segments, links to other information, layering of information and opportunities to interact with the story creator. Web-story instruction also encourages the use of multiple modes of transmission, such as video and sound.[1]

The present study focuses on the non-linear structure of news stories on the Web – particularly on segmenting, layering and the navigation scheme that overlays such a structure – and on the degree of control that such a structure may offer users. This study has two aims. One, it tests assumptions by some industry pundits that non-linear Web stories benefit audiences. Does the non-linear format improve recall of news information? Do readers perceive differences in the experience of reading nonlinear vs. linear news stories? Two, the study explores if non-linearity of narrative structure has impact on user feedback, as the non-linear news story supposedly encourages audience and journalist interaction. Increased interaction has been touted by the industry as a way to improve relations with increasingly disenchanted news audiences (Lanson, 2000) and has also been advocated by journalism scholars who see greater openness between journalists and audiences as a way to ensure more open and robust public discussion (e.g., Schultz, 1999). Does the amount or type of reader feedback differ between linear and non-linear stories? Are non-linear news forms too ambiguous and unfamiliar for readers and journalists to have yet developed the "media logic" (Altheide and Snow, 1979) required for a shared understanding? Does the non-linear format distract audiences from focusing on message content? The nature of feedback provided should shed light on these questions.

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[1] It should be mentioned that despite calls for greater journalist-reader interaction, this interaction has not been fully employed by news Web sites. According to recent studies options such as direct access to sources and databases are still not the norm in many online news sites (Chan-Olmsted and Park, 2000; Outing, 2000; Schultz, 1999; Kiernan and Levy, 1999; Tankard and Ban, 1998). In addition, the availability of these options does not mean readers will take advantage of them (Schultz, 1999; Pew Research Center, 1999). Interactive options are becoming more common, however (Schafer, 2001; Schultz, 1999; South, 1999). Obviously research on online content become dated very quickly, and doubtless online news offerings are now more varied than even these recent studies have found.

Literature

Hypertext theory

Although industry advocates of greater interactivity and user control in news stories do not claim to draw their ideas from any particular theoretical foundation, both their ideas and the enthusiasm for the future of hypertext parallel the work of hypertext theorists and researchers. In the 1960s Theodor Nelson coined the term hypertext and described it, rather conservatively, as "nonsequential writing – text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read as an interactive screen." Nelson saw hypertext format as "a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways" (Landow, 1992, 4). Hypertext has often been referred to as a "space" or "ill-structured domain" in which users navigate according to their own objectives. The emphasis is on user objectives and controls. Information designers are supposed to establish "landmarks," "routes" and "schemas" to aid users in their self-driven exploration (Rouet and Levonen, 1996; Nielsen, 1995). Readers are not expected to view or read in any pre-determined order, and so clear navigation is considered vital to hypertext (Curry et al., 1999).

Hypertext theorists have pushed conceptual boundaries considerably, arguing that hypermedia turn story telling into a poststructuralist experience by opening previously closed texts (Bolter, 1991). According to Landow, hypertext creates an open-bordered story, a story that blurs "all those boundaries that form the running border of . . . what we once thought this word [i.e., media content] could identify, i.e., the supposed end and beginning of a work, the unity of a corpus, the title, the margins, the signatures, the referential realm outside the frame, and so forth" (Landow, 1992, 61). Hypertext theorists say control must ultimately be surrendered to the reader, because boundaries of meaning are not controlled by the message producer (Murray, 1997; Landow, 1992; Bolter, 1991). A common assumption is that the associative linking of information that hypermedia offer is "natural" to the way the human mind works (Jonnasen, 1993; Dillon, 1996).

Hyptertext theorists have had their detractors. Their work has been criticized for ignoring the context of the reading and viewing experience. *How* an author chooses to appropriate references in a work is arguably as important as the information in the references (Miall, 1999). Most often, hypertext theorists have been criticized for offering prescriptive rather than empirical arguments, and for substituting ideology for scientific inquiry, thereby prohibiting the building of useful theory (Rouet and Levonen, 1996). Hypertext theorists espouse notions that the mind is associationist and that the linking inherent in hypertext is therefore more natural to the mind, but they have been accused of offering little scientific evidence or explanatory theory for these assumptions (Dillon, 1996).

A notable exception to the shortage of theory is the work of Spiro and colleagues on Cognitive Flexibility Theory. They define cognitive flexibility as "the ability to spontaneously restructure one's knowledge, in many ways, in adaptive response to radically changing situational demands...This is [partly] a function of the way knowledge is represented (e.g., along multiple rather than single conceptual dimensions) . . ." (Spiro et al., 1991, 28). Hypermedia support such knowledge acquisition because they encourage "revisiting the same material, at different times, in re-arranged contexts, for different purposes, and from different conceptual perspectives is essential for attaining the goals of advanced knowledge acquisition" (Spiro et al., 1991, 28). This theory does not posit that the mind is always cognitively flexible but that it is possible for it to work this way and that hypertext can serve as a support.

While cognitive flexibility theory emphasizes the potential to restructure complex knowledges, theories on processing capacity such as Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988) stress cognitive limitations. Information overload can cause disorientation because it puts too much stress on working memory, and this inhibits the cognitive developments necessary for knowledge acquisition. Cognitive Load Theory has been most often applied to studies of the design of learning material. A frequent finding in studies of hypermedia has been that whether the material is presented in a linear way or a non-linear way does not have an important effect on learning unless insufficient "reading direction" or "scaffolding support" is given to users. Readers must quickly understand the navigational structure of the hypermedia space, or they will become disoriented (Rouet and Levonen, 1996). Navigational challenges will limit users' cognitive abilities to recall and learn information (Dee-Lucas and Larkin, 1995; Brit, Rouet and Perfetti,1996; McKnight, Dillon and Richardson, 1990). This is particularly true with novice hypermedia users (Gray, 1990).

The disorientation that results from insufficient navigational direction also correlates with a decrease in users' expectations of information gain (Dee-Lucas and Larkin, 1995). Studies of student use of hypertext for learning have found that students judge the instruction more favorably if they perceive that they have a high degree of control over the viewing or reading experience (Hannafin & Sullivan, 1996; Morrison, Ross, & Baldwin, 1992). Becker and Dwyer (1994) found that students using hypermedia were more likely to feel they were in control of, the reading experience. However, they did not find that the increase in self-determination translated to increased learning.

Journalism and hypermedia

Some research on online news has focused on presentation of overall site format (e.g., Tewksbury and Althaus, 2000) and on online searching (e.g., Fredin and David, 1998) but little research has focused on the format of individual news stories. A notable exception is a monograph by Fredin (1998) proposing a prototype for a "hyperstory." A hyperstory is a network of interlinked computer files (each of which provides a block of information) from which users make choices and construct their own news "metastories." For such stories to be most effective, they must provide users with clearly described layers of information from which to choose "first a little, and then a lot." The layering of information keeps users from being cognitively overloaded up front. Vargo et al. (2000), found evidence of the importance of layering. Readers reported being more comfortable pursuing links to full stories when the links were in the form of short abstracts, which provided more explanation than headline links or links embedded in story text.

In a study of Internet news browsing, Fredin and David (1998) found that the optimum online experience involves interactions that are not so complex as to confuse the reader, but not so simple and obvious as to become tedious. Findings suggested users should enjoy the search in an active way and that the hypertext experience should increase self-efficacy – i.e., encourage the belief that the information search will ultimately be successful. Readers should have the ability to exercise control over the media experience, which takes place in a changing, even sometimes surprising, environment that nevertheless reassures that goals will ultimately be attained.

Sundar (2000) found that adding communication modes such as audio and video to online news generally hindered recall and detracted from the perceived quality of the experience. He speculates that the additional navigation involved in accessing multimedia may overload users' cognitive capacities and lead to disorientation.

Concepts, hypotheses and research questions

While industry supporters and hypertext theorists assume non-linear online media will lead to greater user involvement and higher levels of satisfaction with the news product, empirical studies of the effects of non-linear reading material suggests the relationship is tenuous and conditional. However, most of this evidence derives from studies of educational curriculum rather than news content. This study seeks evidence of differences in effect deriving from the degree of linearity of news stories.

As previously mentioned, non-linearity in news stories is a characteristic in which concepts and topics are arranged in an associative rather than a sequential way. Non-linear stories offer no predetermined beginning or end but provide readers with clearly defined and comparable choices for entry points into the story. Rather than areas, or nodes, of information being arranged in a cause-and-effect sequence, in non-linear stories nodes are arranged associatively, where each node can be compared and cross-linked with others (Rouet and Levonen, 1996; Esperet, 1996).

In this study's conceptualization of non-linearity, the way the story is structured takes primacy over the way the story may actually be used. Actual use is impossible to control. For example, texts with a purely linear structure can be used in a non-linear way, as readers are at least as likely to skim and search for certain terms as to read from beginning to end. Although the structure does not determine the way the story is read, it can facilitate or channel use. It is assumed that non-linear texts in this study encourage non-linear reading.

This study tests the basic tenets of Spiro's Cognitive Flexibility Theory as well as concepts of limited processing capacity (such as load theory). Both of these theoretical approaches dovetail with concepts underlying Fredin's model of the news hyperstory. Cognitive Flexibility Theory suggests non-linear stories enhance advanced knowledge acquisition by supporting complex restructuring of knowledge. Cognitive load theory suggests there are limits to the mind's ability to process complex formats, and disorientation may result from structures being too complex. Similarly, Fredin says hyperstory information should be arranged in layers so that readers have choices and control over these choices, but that layers should be clearly defined and explained so cognitive processing is not overwhelmed.

Because non-linear stories provide users with well-defined choices for places to enter the stories, readers should perceive they are in more control of the media experience than readers of linear stories. Prior findings from educational research on the effects of hypermedia on learning support this proposition. Control is conceptually defined in this study as having choices and having the ability to pursue choices and their outcomes successfully. Here the concept is "perception of control" rather than actual control in an objective sense.

> H1: Readers of non-linear Web stories will perceive they have significantly greater control over the reading experience than readers of linear Web stories.

Control is an important concept to explain because according to the literature, greater perceived control correlates with greater enjoyment and greater self-efficacy on the part of the user. These may in turn lead to increased recall.

Fredin and David (1998) suggest that the more readers feel involved in, or "lose themselves" in the flow of the reading process, the more likely cognitive effects are to take place. Reader involvement is a state in which keen interest in story content develops without effort. Non-linear Web stories offer greater opportunity for involvement than do linear stories because the associative linking and layering of information lead to higher expectations of success in the information search. The easier the access to information channels (through cross-linking, layering, etc.), the stronger the perception that the information sought may be "just around the corner." Readers are also more likely to impose their own order on the information received in non-linear stories (the "restructuring of knowledge" from cognitive flexibility theory), and this increases readers' feelings of involvement.

> H2: Readers of non-linear Web stories will perceive they have a significantly higher level of involvement in the reading experience than readers of linear Web stories.

Cognitive flexibility theory predicts that non-linear formats are likely to lead to greater knowledge acquisition than linear formats because non-linear presentation allows the user to visit and revisit nodes of information at different times and in different contexts. This revisiting creates additional learning cues, which facilitate retrieval from memory. However, according to empirical research on learning from hypertext, much of the success of this prediction relies on the strength of the navigation "scaffolding" for non-linear content. Complexity of the non-linear format can overload the mental processing system. Disorientation may result and hinder knowledge acquisition. Conflict between concepts of cognitive flexibility and cognitive processing capacity makes prediction difficult, and therefore, rather than stating a hypothesis, a research question is asked.

> RQ1: What is the relationship between the linearity of format of the Web story and the degree of knowledge acquisition by readers?

Finally, two issues are raised that are particularly relevant to the relationship between journalists and audiences. First the question of story credibility will be examined. Journalism scholars have compared the levels of perceived credibility across media technology platforms (TV, radio, print and the Web). Prior to the inclusion of Internet news in this research, television news had traditionally been found to be most credible, followed by print news. With the inclusion of online news, results have been somewhat mixed. A lack of familiarity with the Internet, for example, has led to findings that print text is perceived as more credible than the same text on computer (Murphy, 2000). But as audiences have become more accustomed to obtaining news information on the Web, online news sources have begun to fare better in terms of perceived credibility (Johnson and Kaye, 2000; Flanagin and Metzger, 2000: Pew Research Center, 1999). Non-linear Web stories may suffer in credibility to the extent that audiences identify traditional linear presentation with professionalism. Audiences may not fully trust the unfamiliar. On the other hand, the non-linear format allows readers to obtain additional or validating information through cross-referencing, and this may bolster the perception of content credibility.

RQ2: What is the relationship between the linearity of format of the Web story and the degree of perceived credibility by readers?

Second, advocates of non-linear Web stories claim they encourage audience involvement and that readers of such stories are more likely to seek interaction with journalists who produced the stories. The cognitive flexibility of non-linear stories should lead to a perception by readers that they are more involved in the reading experience. This greater involvement and sense of control should encourage readers to further construct the experience by talking back to, or seeking input from, the message sender. There is a perception (or hope) by journalists and academicians that non-linear stories will bring down the walls and lead to a greater understanding between audiences and journalists (e.g., Lanson, 2000; Schultz, 1999).

RQ3: Are readers of non-linear news stories likely to provide more feedback than readers of linear news stories?

It may be the case that because non-linear stories contain more complex and obvious navigation demands than linear stories, readers of non-linear stories would focus less on the substance of the story's message and more on issues of navigation and presentation. Cognitive theories on limited processing capacity suggest that complex story navigation would force reader attention toward use and format, which would limit attention paid to message content. Such a result would fly in the face of expectations by mass media theorists who see interaction as a way to enlarge and enrich the public discussion of social issues.

Also relevant to this question is the concept of media logic (McQuail, 2000; Altheide and Snow, 1979) – that mass communicators and audiences must have a shared understanding of media format for communication to be successful. Non-linear narrative structures on the Web are relatively new formats, and audiences and journalists may not have yet achieved the necessary shared understanding of these formats for effective communication to take place. Cognitive Load Theory would suggest that if audiences and journalists are paying a great deal of attention to understanding format, they may be neglecting message content.

RQ4: Are users of non-linear Web stories less likely to provide feedback that focuses on the substance of the Web's story's message than users of linear Web stories? Conversely, are readers of non-linear Web stories more likely to provide feedback on issues of site structure and format than readers of linear Web stories?

Method

Participants. Seventy college students were recruited from two sections of a Mass Media and Society course with an incentive of extra credit. Students were mostly undergraduate senior communication majors. Ages ranged from 19 to 52, but 92% of the participants were age 22 or under. After obtaining consent for their participation, students were randomly assigned to two groups, one for each of two experimental conditions.

Design and Procedure. For the two conditions, two versions of a Web story were created and loaded onto the World Wide Web. The first story was created with a linear structure, and the other was created with a non-linear structure. Stories contained identical text, photos and graphics, and graphics and photos were sized the same. The non-linear story was segmented into five different topics, and was overlaid with a navigational scheme. Links to each of the five topics were available in a frame on the left side of each page. In addition, links that allowed readers to link to other pages within the site were embedded within the story content. The non-linear site also contained a home page that presented the story headline, a magazine-style extended subhead, and a photographic image representative of the theme of the site. The site format loosely followed guidelines for Web-story production presented in online design seminars (e.g., Poynter Faculty, 1998) and in textbooks on online communication (Rich, 1999; Farkas and Farkas, 2002).

In contrast the linear version of the story consisted of one page, with a headline at the top, extended subhead below it, and story text in a 25-pica wide column directly below this. Photos and graphics were indented into the text at appropriate locations (where story content reflected graphic content). The format was intended to reflect the format of the typical "repurposed" news story, used routinely by many TV and newspaper Web sites. Each of the two story versions offered students an opportunity to provide feedback electronically to the author of the Web site (the researcher). The theme of the story – cloning – was not particularly time sensitive and was not related to topics of local or community interest.

The experiment was administered to students in a department computer lab. In two of the sessions subjects were exposed to only non-linear stories, and in the other two sessions subjects were exposed to only linear stories. Each subject was seated at a computer and instructed to type in a url address and load a version of the Web story. For each experimental condition students were given 15 minutes to read the story. At the end of the 15 minutes students were instructed to navigate to the feedback page and provide at least three items of feedback to the creator of the Web story by typing comments in the on-screen dialogue box and submitting the feedback electronically. Feedback responses were received in the researcher's e-mail. Students were given 15 minutes to provide feedback, after which they were instructed to close the browser window. Students were then given a post-test pencil-and-paper questionnaire to assess perceived control, involvement, credibility and knowledge acquisition.

Measures of dependent variables. Degree of Control was measured by asking subjects on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) if they agreed that it was easy to go to the parts of the story that most interested them. This operationalization reflects the conceptual definition of control as the ability to pursue choices. The mean was 4.00, and the standard deviation was 1.03. Degree of User Involvement was measured by three questions, each on a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Subjects were asked if they agreed that they felt involved with the story's content while reading, if they agreed that it was fun reading the story and if they agreed that they wanted to know more about the topic after reading the story. These three measures were tested for inter-item reliability, and the alpha was .72. The three measures were averaged. The mean was 3.81, and the standard deviation was .73.

Several questions were asked to assess subjects' recall of content from the story. The story explored the issue of cloning, charting technological breakthroughs over the past three decades, and detailing legal, regulatory and ethical aspects to this issue. Two questions addressed information about the history of cloning, another question addressed a quote from a congressman on the legality of cloning, and two questions asked about the technical process of cloning.

Subjects were scored a "2" if they answered the question correctly and a "1" if the answer was incorrect. Respondents were also asked on a three-point scale how confident they were in their response (1 = not confident, 2 = somewhat confident, 3 = very confident). Responses were then scored again, based on a combination of answers to questions and confidence levels. A missed answer scored a 1, a correct answer/not confident scored a 2, a correct answer/somewhat confident scored a 3 and a correct answer/very confident scored a 4. Data from the five questions were summed. The mean was 3.08, and the standard deviation was .61.

Degree of Credibility, the dependent variable in the second research question, was measured by asking subjects if they agreed the story was believable, accurate and complete. Each of these three questions was measured on a five-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). Prior studies have shown believability to the most consistent dimension of credibility, but accuracy and completeness have been other consistent dimensions as well (Flanagin and Metzger, 2000). The test for inter-item reliability among these three measures resulted in an alpha of .70, and these measures were averaged to create a scaled measure of credibility. The mean was 3.90, and the standard deviation was .60.

To assess research questions three and four, subjects were asked to submit at least three items of feedback to the Web site's creator. A lower limit was put on number of responses to ensure sufficient response to measure RQ4. Feedback items were submitted electronically from the site, and most feedback items consisted of a sentence or two. Once collected the researcher sorted items into two categories: items commenting on message content and items commenting on site usability (navigation, ease of use and visual design in terms of layout, typography, color, imagery). Two undergraduate assistants were given definitions of these two categories and asked to sort the items as well. There was disagreement over how to categorize 12 of the items, and these comments were excluded, leaving 324 feedback items in all. The mean number of responses was 4.17, and the standard deviation was 1.38.

Findings

Results of mean comparisons and independent samples t-tests for the two treatment levels are shown in Table 1. Hypothesis one received support, as subjects exposed to the non-linear stories reported a significantly higher degree of perceived control over the reading experience than subjects exposed to linear stories (p=.005). On a scale of one to five, the mean for the non-linear group was 4.47 (SD = .51) and the mean for the linear group was 3.44 (SD = 1.21). It appears that linearity of story format does have an effect on perception of control, which reinforces findings by earlier studies.

Hypothesis two received no support, as it appears linearity of format has no effect on perceived involvement in the story. There was no significant difference in perceived involvement between the means for the non-linear group and the means for the linear group for either the scaled involvement variable or for the three separate measures of involvement. On a scale of one to five the mean for the linear group on the scaled involvement variable was 3.77 (SD = .83) and the mean for the non-linear group was 3.85 (SD = .64). This finding runs counter to the expectations of previous research on journalism hypermedia (e.g., Fredin, 1998).

The first research question addressed possible effects of linearity of story format on level of knowledge acquisition, which was measured by five recall measures scaled into a single variable. Results showed no significant effects from linearity of format. On a scale of one to four, the mean of the recall variable for the linear group was 3.09 (SD = .53) was practically identical to the mean for the non-linear group, at 3.08 (SD = .68). This finding reinforces findings from earlier studies of the effects of hypermedia on knowledge acquisition. However, it contradicts expectations of cognitive flexibility theory that non-linearity would improve recall because the mind works in a non-linear way.

These findings also undercut expectations of Cognitive Load theory. Previous studies have suggested that knowledge acquisition declines when hypertext stories cause disorientation in the reader, but disorientation was not a factor in the present study. Subjects in each treatment group were asked if they "felt lost" while reading their stories and if reading the story was "easy." There was no significant difference between the groups on these measures.

The second research question asked if linearity of format would have an impact on perceived credibility of story content. Results indicate no significant difference between the means of the two groups on the scaled credibility measure. On a scale of one to five, the mean for the linear group was 4.00 (SD = .65), and the mean for the non-linear group was 3.90 (SD = .56). This finding is consistent with the ambiguity in the literature on the perception of credibility in Web-based media.

The third research question addressed the possibility that amount of audience feedback would differ significantly according to linearity of format. Users of the linear story offered significantly more items of feedback than users of the nonlinear story (p = .03). The mean number of feedback items for the linear group was 4.61 (SD = 1.58), and the mean number of feedback items for the nonlinear group was 3.84 (SD = 1.14).

Finally, the fourth research question addressed the possibility that the nature of feedback would vary according to linearity of format. There was a significant difference between the two treatment groups in the type of feedback items received (p = .002). The mean percent of user feedback that focused on message content was 63.8% for linear stories (SD = .31), and the mean for nonlinear stories was 41.0%. (SD = .32). It appears there is a much stronger likelihood that users of non-linear news stories – i.e., stories with more complex navigational schemes, layering and more intricate cross-linking – will focus on issues of site navigation, usability and visual format than on the content or substance of the message.

Discussion

Findings suggest linearity has an effect on degree of perceived control over the media experience and on the nature of audience feedback, but it does not affect degree of perceived credibility, reader involvement or knowledge acquisition. The finding on degree of perceived control supported previous findings in the education literature. Non-linear narrative structures facilitate the perception by the reader that they may determine the reading sequence and the types of information received. Such a format seems to be positioned well for the future, as audiences expectations for control over media experiences is likely to increase due to continued technological innovations across media types.

However, just as studies on hypertext curriculum have found, perceived control did not lead to increased knowledge acquisition. Cognitive Flexibility Theory received little support, as there was no significant difference in recall between readers of the linear stories and readers of the non-linear stories. The non-linear structure also did not lead to a decrease in knowledge acquisition, as suggested by Cognitive Load Theory. Findings from the test of user recall suggest that the increased navigation challenge of the non-linear site did not overly tax cognitive processing.

Previous studies have found that readers enjoyed non-linear content more than linear content, but this was not the case in the present study. Users of the non-linear story did not find the material any more "fun" to read than the users of the linear story. In fact none of the reader involvement measures showed significant differences between the two treatment conditions.

Linearity of story content also had no effect on degree of perceived credibility (accuracy, believability and completeness). There has been much speculation in the journalism literature that online news may suffer from a credibility problem, but the most recent research indicates that online news fares well in perceived credibility in comparison to TV, print and radio news. Just as online audiences are likely becoming more accustomed to reading news online (and therefore more trusting), users may also be getting more comfortable with hypermedia formats.

However, findings on audience feedback in this study undercut this assumption. Clearly readers of the non-linear story focused on issues of navigation, usability and visual format to a much greater degree than readers of the linear story. The difference in type of feedback suggests a fascination or keen interest with issues of format and structure. Readers understand these stories well enough to navigate them with ease, but the navigational structure still calls attention to itself.

The structure does not recede into obviousness – navigating non-linear structures may not yet be second nature for most users.

It is interesting that significantly more feedback was received from readers of the linear site than from the non-linear site. It seems reasonable to expect the opposite because readers of the non-linear site had both content and complexity of format on which to comment. This finding also contradicts expectations that readers will find non-linear formats more involving and will therefore be more likely to seek contact with message producers. It may be that feedback flows more freely when audiences are able to focus more on content than on form and usability.

One of the limitations of the present study is that only one story was used in the treatment. Replications of this study with different stories could shed light on how story-specific the feedback effect was. And as with any study using a lab setting, there was undoubtedly some artificiality in the results. Feedback comments were solicited in a contrived setting, and undoubtedly the context within which audiences read news stories has an impact on the nature of the feedback they provided. Also, generalization of the findings is limited by the nature of the sample, which consisted almost entirely of undergraduate senior communication students. However, effects from the nature of the sample cuts two ways. On the one hand, undergraduate senior communication students are as a group relatively Web savvy and fairly well accustomed to using online news sites in comparison to the general population. The fact that navigation structure did not recede into the perceptual background of these users suggests this would be the case for most of the population. On the other hand younger audiences may be more likely to focus on format and presentation than on content.

Overall, findings do not support the optimism that many journalism educators and media professionals feel for the non-linear story format. This is not to say that the promotion and production of such formats is necessarily wrong. Such experimentation represents a necessary step in the creation of a new "media logic" that may be shared by message producers and audiences. Nevertheless, message producers must carefully assess audience reaction to formats and not uncritically adopt format trends as professional routines. This is a real concern, as mass communicators typically adopt "production images" of audiences rather than meet directly with them (McQuail, 2000; Ryan and Peterson, 1981). In addition, there have been complaints from Web-site producers that they are not receiving enough information about audiences (Anzur, 2001).

Findings do not suggest that it is harmful to give audiences more control and greater access to information. Rather the implication here is that the scheme by which audiences navigate this more complex format should not only be clear and easy to use, it should be as transparent as possible. The graphical portrayal of the scheme should be functional rather than flashy. However it is difficult to say whether the navigational scheme and format of the story calls attention to itself because of its particular structure and graphics or because in general audiences have not arrived yet at a complete understanding of the media logic of the non-linear story. Replication of this study with other Web story treatments and with other samples should help answer this question.

Table 1: Comparison of means for nonlinear story and linear story treatment conditions

Dependent variables	Mean Linear story (N = 35)	Standard deviation (linear story)	Mean Nonlinear story (N = 35)	Standard deviation (nonlinear story)	t	Degrees of freedom	p
Degree of perceived control (1 = low control, 5 = high control)	3.44	1.21	4.47	.51	-3.194	69	.005
Degree of user involvement (1 = low involvement, 5 = high involvement)	3.77	.83	3.85	.64	-.467	69	.64
Knowledge acquisition (story recall) (1 = low recall, 4 = high recall)	3.09	.53	3.08	.68	.059	69	.95
Perceived credibility (1 = low credibility, 5 = high credibility)	4.00	.65	3.90	.56	.481	69	.63
Focus on story content in feedback (percent of total items)	.638	.31	.410	.32	3.187	69	.002
Total number of feedback items	4.61	1.58	3.84	1.14	2.306	69	.03

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Whose Values Are News Values?

What Journalists and Citizens Want

by

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INTRODUCTION

The purported disconnect between citizens and journalists is a frequent topic of discussion in the profession and in the academy. Evidence of such a disconnect is readily at hand, but is the problem that journalists are doing a poor job, or that citizens and journalists fundamentally disagree on what the newspaper should do?

Newspaper circulation in the United States has continued to decline, both in whole numbers (e.g., a daily circulation drop from 62.3 million in 1990 to 56 million in 2000) and in penetration, which dropped from more than 80 percent in the 1960s to near 50 percent in 2000 (Albers, 2001; Editor & Publisher, 2000; Newspaper Association of America, 2001a, 2001b; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001). Perhaps explaining the circulation trends, public opinion polling in recent years has indicated a deepening distrust of the media (Freedom Forum, 2001; Geimann, 1997; Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, 2001) among Americans and severely eroded media credibility (Urban, 1999; Urban, Christie, & Klos, 2000).

Critics of traditional journalism contend the staffs at most newsrooms are publishing newspapers that don't meet readers' needs (Fallows, 1996; Fuller, 1996; Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2001; Merritt, 1995, 1998; Rosen, 1995, 1999). They say declining circulation and declining numbers of newspapers, along with declining civic participation (Putnam, 1995), prove that journalists must reconceptualize journalism to restore citizens' faith in media and democracy.

Traditional journalists have long made daily assumptions about what readers want from newspapers. Since the early 1990s, the public journalists have made counter assertions about what readers need and want. Until now there has been no comparative analysis of the attitudes, beliefs, and values of citizens and journalists. This is the first study to examine comparatively and quantitatively the views of a group of citizens and a group of journalists on traditional and public journalism values in newswork. Moreover, in looking at disconnect from a uses-and-gratifications perspective, this research departs from the more commonly encountered media effects research that has examined journalism in general and public journalism in particular (Denton, Thorson, & Coyle, 1995; Friedland, Sotirovic, & Daily, 1998; Miller, 1994; Thorson, Ognianova, Coyle, & Lambeth, 1998).

The research reported here sought to learn whether citizens and journalists really do see a different role for media. It focused on the possible disconnect between working-class citizens living in a suburb of Raleigh, North Carolina, and the staff of *The News & Observer* of Raleigh. The study compared attitudes and expectations among journalists and non-journalists on scales relating to traditional and non-traditional journalism beliefs and behaviors. The research question was: Do journalists and citizens — in this case blue-collar families — share or hold separate world views pertaining to the role and practice of journalism?

The research extends the work of Bare (1995), who studied three newsrooms to delineate the existence of journalistic belief systems that could be identified with traditional and public journalism practices. Bare created three scales relating to public journalism beliefs and further examined the scales of Weaver & Wilhoit (1991) for traditional journalistic belief systems. Based on the belief systems identifiable in the public journalism literature and traditional belief systems identified by Weaver & Wilhoit (1991), the following hypotheses were made about comparative beliefs of journalists and citizens about journalism:

H1: Citizens are more open to journalists working with and helping citizens in community problem solving than journalists.

H2: Citizens value newspaper leadership in community problem solving more than journalists do.

H3: Citizens have greater faith in their ability to solve community problems than journalists do.

H4: Journalists value investigative and interpretive journalism more than citizens do.

H5: Journalists value speed in delivering news to the widest possible audience more than citizens do.

H6: Journalists place greater value on a "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable" than citizens do.

H7: Journalists are more likely to value editorial detachment and objectivity than citizens do.

METHOD

Belief Systems and Scale Variables

From the literature of public journalism, Bare created survey questions that asked how journalists felt about various practices and behaviors. For instance, respondents were asked the importance of newspapers helping people solve problems in the community, the importance of newspapers working with civic groups on community improvement projects, the importance of getting news to the public quickly, the importance of providing analysis and interpretation of complex problems, and so forth. The questions were used to create scale variables (Appendix A) relating to three belief systems associated with public journalism and the three traditional journalism belief systems identified by Weaver & Wilhoit (1991, p. 15). These belief systems are:

(1) Personal Public Journalism, "beliefs representing staff members' attitudes toward personal involvement in solving community problems" (Bare, 1995, p. 102).

(2) Institutional Public Journalism, "beliefs representing staff members' attitudes toward the institutional involvement by newspapers in solving community problems" (p. 102). These were "designed to measure how strongly journalists believed their own newspapers should become involved in solving community problems" (p. 103).

(3) Community Trust, "beliefs representing staff members' attitudes toward trust in the community's grassroots problem-solving efforts" (p. 102). These were "designed to determine how strongly journalists' believed that citizens and leaders in their communities could solve local problems and elevate democratic ideals through their own actions" (p. 103).

And the traditional journalism belief systems (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1991):

(4) Investigative/Interpretive, "investigating claims, analyzing complex problems, discussing national policy, and developing intellectual interests" (Bare, 1995, p. 114).

(5) Information Dissemination, "getting information quickly to the widest possible audience" (p. 116).

(6) Adversarial, "being a skeptical adversary of public officials (or businesses)" (p. 113).

Bare also examined two other belief systems he associated with traditional journalism:

(7) Community Cynicism, "often associated with hard-boiled traditional journalists. ... [and] may be seen as a negative, if the belief is so strong that it corrupts journalists' abilities to communicate complete images of issues and of community" (Bare, 1995, p. 110).

(8) Nonconsequentialism, which "would be related to the 'detached' requirement of traditional journalism beliefs. ... Detached journalists bear no responsibility for what happens after the information is delivered" (p. 110-111).

Bare (1995) surveyed for the existence and strength of these belief systems in three newspapers, including the *News & Observer*. Inasmuch as part of this research was a time study of the belief systems at work in the *News & Observer*, all of the belief systems examined by Bare were incorporated in the present research.

Bare measured constraint, "the degree to which the components of a belief system are internally consistent and well-developed" (Bare, 1998, p. 87) using Cronbach's alpha, which is a means of demonstrating "whether the test designer was correct in expecting a certain collection of items to yield interpretable statements about individual differences"

(Cronbach, 1951). Using the SPSS for Windows statistical procedures, the reliability of the groups of questions to explore the same areas was examined.

There is some difference of opinion on the appropriate threshold values for Cronbach's alpha, with suggested minimums ranging from .5 to .7 for exploratory data (Meyer, 1991; Nunnally, 1978) to .90 to .95 for more critical research (Nunnally, 1978). This study followed Bare's research design, which set alphas of .7 as the threshold for a constrained belief system, but inasmuch as the present research was in part a time study of the newsroom values Bare found in 1994, all changes in index scores and alphas were relevant and were reported.

Data for the scale variables were examined by one-way ANOVA and Tukey's post hoc test, using SPSS for Windows 10.1.

The Instruments

The mail-survey instruments for the present study consisted of eight-page questionnaires, with 108 questions in the journalists' survey and 103 in the survey mailed to citizens. The questionnaires basically replicated Bare's 1994 survey instrument, with additional questions used in surveys of journalists (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996). The responses of the journalists were intended to create the benchmark against which the citizens' belief systems about newspapers could be measured. Hence, the surveys were nearly identical, with such phrasing as "your newspaper" meaning for the journalists, the one that employs you, and for the citizens, the one you read or would read.

Response Rate

Compared with Bare's study, which reported a *News & Observer* response rate of 70 percent (Bare, 1995, p. 98), this study produced a newsroom response rate of 81.6 percent, with 182 completed surveys out of 223 eligible respondents.

Assaying the response rate in the citizens' survey is more problematic. Whereas a 70 or 80 percent response rate is considered "very good" (Babbie, 1992, p. 267), a similarly high response rate from a cold survey of citizens was less likely. Bly talked of direct mail response rates in product marketing of 0.5 percent to 10 percent (Bly, 1994), while Hodgson reported ranges of 7.5 percent to 68 percent, depending on format, questions and incentives (Hodgson, 1980). Fink, pointing out that "unsolicited surveys receive the lowest fraction of responses" (Fink, 1995) said that "A 20% response rate for a first mailing ... is not uncommon," although incentives and follow-up mailing may raise the response rate to 70 percent or more (p. 55). In general, Babbie said, "a response rate of at least 50 percent is 'adequate' for analysis and reporting." (Babbie, 1992).

Packets were mailed to residents of two neighborhoods of Garner, North Carolina, that were identified by the town Planning Department as typical of working-class neighborhoods by such measures as age and assessed value of the housing stock and the length of time the current owners had lived there. The survey's demographic questions, such as education level, job type, and income, subsequently confirmed the respondents' blue-collar status. Of 386 eligible persons, 178 surveys were completed for a response rate of 46.1 percent.

RESULTS

Tables 1, 2, and 3 show the reliability coefficients and means for each of the three public journalism belief systems for the *News & Observer* staff and for the Garner citizens in the 1997 study and the alphas and means Bare obtained from his survey of the *News & Observer* in 1994.

Table 1. Personal Public Journalism scale.

	Reliability	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=163)	.8225	**14.0107***
News & Observer – 1997 (n=177)	.7811	**11.0829***
News & Observer – 1994 (n=105)	.7306	**12.5631***

F=32.941 p=<.001 *Indicates pairs significantly different at .05 level

As in the 1994 survey, the Personal Public Journalism belief system, relating to newspaper staff members' personal involvement in community problem solving, was the most constrained of all the belief systems tested in1997; that is, all items in the scale were internally consistent and identifiable as a belief system (Table 1). Interestingly, the comparison suggests that the belief system had become more constrained in the newsroom of 1997 over 1994 but as a belief was subscribed to less. Moreover, the belief system was even more constrained among the citizens, indicating that the public journalism ethic is less ambiguous for the non-journalists than in the newsroom of the *News & Observer*. In addition, a statistically significant difference in the importance of reporters being personally involved in solving problems was measured among all groups, with the citizens ranking personal involvement among the journalists in community problem solving higher than did the journalists (Table 1), and the data support the prediction of H1 that citizens are more open to journalists working with and helping citizens in community problem solving than journalists.

Table 2. Institutional Public Journalism scale.

	Reliability	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=158)	.6081	9.1420
News & Observer – 1997 (n=174)	.6374	9.0571
News & Observer – 1994 (n=104)	.6702	**10.9902***

F=19.320 p=<.001 *Indicates significant difference at .05 level

Neither group produced sufficiently high alphas to identify Institutional Public Journalism (Table 2) as a constrained belief system, although the alphas of .6081 for the citizens and .6374 for the journalists are suggestive. The citizens, among whom the belief system was even less constrained than the journalists, showed a slightly greater tendency to see the newspaper as a player in community improvement, but the difference between the citizens and journalists in 1997 was not statistically significant. Thus, there was no support for H2, which predicted greater interest among the citizens than the journalists in the newspaper providing leadership in community problem solving. It is worth noting that the Institutional Public Journalism belief system appears to have given ground in the newsroom between 1994 and 1997. Statistically significant differences were found between the newsroom of 1994 and both other groups.

Two sets of questions (Appendix A) were used to create scale variables for the Community Trust belief system (Table 3) and its obverse, Community Cynicism (Table 4). The responses on each variable were consistent with one another and somewhat surprising.

Table 3. Community Trust scale.

	Reliability	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=159)	.3234	31.3415
News & Observer – 1997 (n=175)	.5397	30.2697
News & Observer – 1994 (n=105)	.3902	31.0326

F=1.380 p=>.05

For the Community Trust scale (Table 3), the low alphas show that the belief system is not well formed among either the citizens or the journalists. It is noteworthy and alarming that this belief system relating to citizen-participation in grassroots democracy is least constrained among the citizens. No significant differences were found among the groups, and there was no support for H3.

Table 4 shows differences between the citizens and the journalists on the traditional belief system of Community Cynicism. Interesting differences are seen, both in the journalists of 1997 and the citizens and between the journalists of the two studies. Although none reach the requisite alphas as established by Bare, the Community Cynicism belief system (Table 4) is actually seen to be more strongly constrained among the citizens than among the journalists, among whom the belief is less strongly held in

1997 than in 1994. Significance testing showed no difference between the journalists but significant differences between the citizens and either group of journalists. Although no group achieved the alpha level for a fully-constrained belief system, the mean score for citizens showed them to be less positive than the journalists about the ability of the citizen to make things work in society.

Table 4. Community Cynicism scale.

	Reliability	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=157)	.6409	**20.6540***
News & Observer – 1997 (n=176)	.5811	16.238
News & Observer – 1994 (n=105)	.6649	24.3367

F=24.861 p=<.001 *Indicates significant difference at .05 level

Tables 5 and 6 show results of constructing scales for what Bare (1995), following Weaver & Wilhoit (1991), identified as questions relating to traditional journalism values. For citizens and journalists alike, the data show the Investigative/Interpretive value to be the second-strongest belief system of all those investigated, and in the newsroom the degree of constraint nearly reaches Bare's requisite .70 (Table 5). Interestingly, the data show decline in the belief system's constraint among the journalists from 1994. However, while the constraint among journalists was higher in 1994 than among the citizens in 1997, the alpha among the citizens indicates a moderately constrained belief that it is the job of journalism to investigate, analyze, and interpret the world for readers.

Table 5. Investigative/Interpretive scale.

	Reliability	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=162)	.6591	**8.5399***
News & Observer – 1997 (n=174)	.6839	9.7216
News & Observer – 1994 (n=105)	.7551	10.2190

F=29.418 p=<.001 *Indicates significant difference at .05 level

The data analysis showed the citizens' score to be significant against each of the journalism groups (Table 5). Although the belief system was reasonably well formed for both citizens and journalists, the citizens were inclined to place less importance on the traditional Investigative/Interpretive functions of the newspaper than the journalists, thereby supporting H4.

One of the sharpest differences between the citizens and the journalists emerges from analysis of the Information Dissemination function (Table 6). Among the three newsrooms he studied, Bare found only weak correlations for the traditional value of "getting information quickly to the widest possible audience" (p. 116), and alphas for this value in each of the three newsrooms were not "remotely close to the .70 threshold, indicating that these attitudes are much less consistent and less constrained ... than the Investigative/Interpretive beliefs" (p. 128). In the present study, the alpha produced by the newsroom was considerably lower than the 1994 research, indicating an even sharper de-emphasis of the traditional journalistic values of timeliness or mass appeal or both. In contrast, the citizens produced an alpha on this value that was only marginally lower than the alphas for the Investigative/Interpretive beliefs, indicating that these two belief systems are fairly consistent and well constrained among this group of non-journalists.

Table 6. Information Dissemination scale.

	Reliability	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=162)	.6545	**6.4110***
News & Observer – 1997 (n=176)	.2392	6.2938
News & Observer – 1994 (n=105)	.4284	9.5905

F=4.574 p=<.05 *Indicates significant difference at .05 level

As noted above, the citizens produced a sharply higher alpha, indicating a moderately constrained belief system for the Information Dissemination value, in contrast to the journalists. Data analysis identified statistical significance in the difference between the citizens and the journalists of 1994, but no significant difference between the citizens and the 1997 journalists. At the later date, the data fail to support H5's prediction that journalists value speed in delivering news to wide audiences more than citizens do. Thus, for the journalists the belief system is not well formed and is less important in their work than other aspects, while among the citizens the belief system is much more consistent but Information Dissemination is not highly important as they view journalism.

The scores for the single-item Adversarial measure, shown in Table 7, were examined and significant differences were found between the 1997 journalists and both the citizens and the 1994 newsroom. The data show that among citizens it is less important for the media to be constantly skeptical of public officials than journalists believe, and among journalists the score actually increased in 1997 compared with 1994, supporting H6.

Table 7. Adversarial belief.

	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=119)	2.1118
News & Observer – 1997 (n=172)	**2.7175***
News & Observer – 1994 (n=103)	2.5922

F=49.418 p=<.001 *Indicates significant difference at .05 level

Table 8 shows differences between the citizens and the journalists on the traditional belief system of Nonconsequentialism. Interesting differences are seen, both in the journalists of 1997 and the citizens and between the journalists of the two studies. Although none reach the requisite alphas as established by Bare

Among citizens and journalists alike, the Nonconsequentialism, "detached journalist," belief system was not well-constrained at all (Table 8), but here the more startling finding was the degree to which constraint had fallen off in the newsroom between 1994 and 1997, to an alpha level that was well below the citizens as well. Nevertheless, analysis identified significant differences for all three groups. Here again, the journalists were more inclined than the citizens to see journalism as responsible for what happens to the people, issues, and events that they write about and possibly more willing to engage in the behaviors associated with public journalism than the citizens would expect or want them to do.

Table 8. Nonconsequentialism reliability scale.

	Reliability	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=164)	.4577	**23.7585***
News & Observer – 1997 (n=175)	.2515	**23.7800***
News & Observer – 1994 (n=105)	.5644	**21.0204***

F=21.297 p=<.001 *Indicates significant difference at .05 level

Although the scale variables offer insights into the belief systems held by the citizens and the journalists in this study, attention to individual item responses in the mail survey further delineates the two groups' differences on issues that relate to disconnect between citizens and the journalists, and between citizens and society. They also relate to some of the behaviors that are contested by traditional and public journalists, such as public listening and letting the citizens set the media agenda (Charity, 1995). The survey showed differences that were statistically significant at the .05 level between citizens and journalists in three areas: (1) faith that citizens can and will become community problem-solvers, (2) the role of the journalists in analyzing, interpreting and leading change, and (3) what citizens are likely to want in the way of certain news.

For instance, in questions about citizens' ability to make a difference in public affairs, journalists were more optimistic than citizens. Table 9 shows that journalists, for example, were more likely to *disagree* with the statement: "It's good that residents of my community vote, but elections don't really change anything."

Table 9: It's good that residents of my community vote, but elections don't really change anything. (Scale: 1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree.)

	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=164)	3.4506
News & Observer – 1997 (n=175)	2.4400

t=-4.903 p=<.001

Additionally, Table 10 shows that more journalists than citizens *disagree* with the statement, "The public is gullible and easily fooled."

Table 10: The public is gullible and easily fooled. (Scale: 1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree.)

	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=163)	4.2147
News & Observer – 1997 (n=175)	3.0229

t=-5.521 p=<.001

Citizens and journalists gave generally similar responses on whether "Most folks in my community aren't smart enough to understand all of the complicated details of local problems" (Table 11) and "Local residents who attend town council meetings and stay abreast of local issues can help improve the quality of life in the community" (Table 12), although for each question the journalists tended to be more optimistic than the citizens about citizen clout.

Table 11: Most folks in my community aren't smart enough to understand enough of the complicated details of local problems. (Scale: 1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree.)

	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=160)	2.6563
News & Observer – 1997 (n=138)	2.0652

t=-3.097 p=<.05

Table 12: Local residents who attend town council meetings and stay abreast of local issues can help improve the quality of life in the community. (Scale: 1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree.)

	Mean
Garner Citizens – 1997 (n=161)	5.3416
News & Observer – 1997 (n=174)	5.7644

t=-2.876 p=<.05

Whether from a desire for independence or a reflection of a lack of media credibility, citizens said they want to think things out for themselves. Asked how important it is for the newspaper to "provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems," significantly more journalists said it was quite or extremely important (Table 13). Fewer citizens than journalists consider it vital for their newspaper to set the political agenda or to influence public opinion (Table 14 and Table 15).

Table 13: How important is it for your newspaper to provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems? (Scale: 1 = not really/4 = extremely.)

	% Citizens (n=163)	% Journalists (n=175)
Not really/somewhat	44.2	10.8
Quite/Extremely	55.8	89.2

Table 14: How important is it for your newspaper to set the political agenda? (Scale: 1 = not really/4 = extremely.)

	% Citizens (n=164	% Journalists (n=177)
Not really/somewhat	76.4	69.6
Quite/Extremely	23.6	30.4

Table 15: How important is it for your newspaper to influence public opinion? (Scale: 1 = not really/4 = extremely.)

	% Citizens (n=164)	% Journalists (n=177
Not really/somewhat	77.7	58.2
Quite/Extremely	22.2	41.8

The disconnect remains apparent when it comes to what citizens are likely to want in the way of certain news. Asked what they perceive to be reader preferences for news content, citizens put much greater emphasis on breaking news over analysis (Table 16), covering politics (Table 17), voter information (Table 18), and reporting on crime (Table 19).

Table 16: Readers are more interested in the day's breaking news than in analysis. (Scale: 1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree.)

	% Citizens (n=164)	% Journalists (n=177)
Strongly/somewhat disagree	7.3	29.6
Somewhat/strong agree	81.0	53.4

Table 17: How important is it for journalists to cover politics? (Scale: 1 = not really/4 = extremely.)

	% Citizens (n=164)	% Journalists (n=177)
Not really/somewhat	37.7	56.5
Quite/Extremely	62.3	43.5

Table 18: How important is it that your newspaper explain to readers why it's important they vote? (Scale: 1 = not really/4 = extremely.)

	% Citizens (n=164)	% Journalists (n=177)
Not really/somewhat	24.6	53.8
Quite/Extremely	75.5	46.2

Table 19: How important is it that your newspaper report on victims of violent crimes? (Scale: 1 = not really/4 = extremely.)

	% Citizens (n=164)	% Journalists (n=177)
Not really/somewhat	26.9	68.6
Quite/Extremely	73.2	31.4

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

Heretofore, studies of journalists and readers have tended to examine one group or the other but not both groups and on the same variables. Moreover, in many of the early public journalism studies, the research largely looked for measures of variance and effect in such artifacts as reader recognition of the journalists' campaigns, rather than concrete change in outcomes (Denton et al., 1995; Miller, 1994; Pew Charitable Trusts, 1997). This study extends Bare's research by confirming his findings about the public journalism beliefs held by the *News & Observer* staff four years later and by comparing those belief systems with beliefs held by a portion of the potential readership of the newspaper, in this case blue-collar citizens.

Although identifying similar saliences for belief systems found in 1994, the 1997 data also suggest possible shifts in both the constraint of operative newsroom belief systems in Raleigh and in how the journalists feel about key features of their job and their readers. In this area, the data shed light on the constraint of the overall newsroom cultural norms and the work culture's ability to socialize its members, yield a newspaper whose content is uniform over time, and provide its members defenses with which to withstand pressure for change. Examining the data between the newsrooms or 1994 and 1997 suggests that changes have occurred in the work cultures.

Bare (1995) selected the *News & Observer* as a progressive middle ground between the prototypical public journalism newspaper, the *Wichita* (Kansas) *Eagle*, and conservative, traditional *Omaha* (Nebraska) *World-Herald.* Some *News & Observer* editors and staff insist that theirs is not a public journalism newspaper (personal communications, February 1996-September 1997), even though the paper has been a partner with other media in a major North Carolina public journalism initiative ("Collaborative effort seeks your opinions, feedback," 1996), and has adopted other features of content and coverage that are identified with public journalism.

In the analysis of newsroom and citizen belief systems, the data point to interesting and important possibilities. Although the *News & Observer* staff members appear to rate public journalism beliefs fairly highly, they also appear to be relatively immune to some key behaviors that are associated with public journalism. Although the data here suggest a newsroom in transition, or at least in some conflict, the Personal Public Journalism belief system — the attitude toward personal involvement in community problem solving — is more constrained in 1997 than in 1994, as is the newsroom's trust in the community to be able to solve those problems. Constraint notwithstanding, the staff appears to value both belief systems less, certainly less than the citizens do.

The findings suggest several other points:

(1) Confirming other studies, the citizens in this survey expressed disconnect from civic processes. The data for polar opposite scale variables for Community Trust (Table 3) and Community Cynicism (Table 7) indicate greater constraint for the belief that the community is less likely to solve its problems at the grassroots level.

(2) However, the responses in the surveys suggest that if the citizens feel disconnected from community life and civic processes, they have not lost a desire to be connected to them or an interest in the news to help them accomplish that. Taken together, the findings in (1) and (2) suggest a disconnect between citizens and civic life that they would repair by narrowing the knowledge/power gap between the "experts" featured in news stories and themselves.

(3) The citizens do want to see more of their world in the newspaper, and to hear from sources like themselves and who represent their viewpoints when public issues are being reported.

(4) The journalists leaned slightly more toward public journalism beliefs than did the citizens. This runs counter to the contention of public journalism's philosophers that disconnect is the result of traditional journalism's "objective distance" from actual solutions, its emphasis on issues removed from everyday life of the readers, and its unwillingness to take responsibility for results in public life (Charity, 1995; Rosen, 1995). Implicit in much of the public journalism literature is a sense that citizens are just waiting for a new, more empowering, more liberating form of journalism, and that if it is made available to them, they will re-engage in community and possibly newspaper use as well (Charity, 1995, p. 51). The data here cast doubt on that; the citizens' responses suggest that they are wary of journalism that appears manipulative. The journalism techniques of analysis and interpretation raise issues with them of outsiders telling them what to think and what to do.

The findings of Bare (1995) and the contentions of other writers on the public journalism movement state that public journalism is an acquired belief system. In this case, the journalists have acquired a belief system not as strongly held — or not yet acquired — by their audience. It seems reasonable to suggest that public journalism may have to educate readers as well as journalists to the value of a different approach to journalism. Anecdotal evidence supported by data in this survey and other aspects of the research suggests that readers can be just as suspicious of this more holistic journalism as many journalists have been, and that it may be naive to expect the public to embrace public journalism without media campaigns to explain why the new system is better than traditional journalism.

From a uses-and-gratifications perspective, the data suggest a distinct disconnect between how the citizens and journalists in this survey view the role of the journalists and the newspaper. Uses of the medium, either as a source of information or an outlet for a world view, proceed from beliefs about what the paper should do; gratifications follow from how closely the work of the journalists matches those wants and expectations. The data here argue that these citizens and journalists see the utility of newspapers and journalists differently, and as a consequence must value outcomes differently.

It was beyond the scope of this research to ascertain the seriousness of the disconnect. As a case study involving one newspaper and one subset of readers, the study cannot be generalized even to blue-collar readers everywhere, much less all readers, although citizen complaints heard at all levels suggest there may be much common ground in the beliefs expressed among the citizens in this study. The results suggest a fruitful avenue for further study and provide a basis for further measurement. The answers are important to the discussion of what's wrong with journalism and how it can be repaired.

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APPENDIX A

Component items in scale variables measuring newsroom culture's belief systems:

1. Personal Public Journalism scale.
(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)
Importance of ...

Q. Helping people in my community.
Q. Solving problems in my community.
Q. Improving community morale.
Q. Working with civic groups on community improvement projects.
Q. Service journalism that helps readers solve problems.

2. Institutional Public Journalism scale.

(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)

Q. My newspaper has an obligation to help the community find ways to solve problems.
Q. Those of us in the newspaper business have an obligation to use our newspaper as a tool to help improve the quality of life in our community.

3. Community Trust scale.

(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)

Q. Local business leaders should take positions of leadership in the effort to solve problems in my community.
Q. Local residents who attend city council meetings and stay abreast of local issues can help improve the quality of life in the community.
Q. Improving local schools is the key to solving problems in my community.
Q. The key to solving community problems is involvement from as many local residents as possible.
Q. Church organizations and local religious leaders will have to have input in order for problems in my community to be solved.
Q. Most people I know in the community are pretty energetic and bright and could probably solve lots of problems if it weren't for such a complex bureaucracy.

4. Investigative/Interpretive scale.

(1=Not really/4=Extremely)
Important for newspaper to ...

Q. Provide analysis and interpretation of complex problems.
Q. Investigate claims and statements made by the government.
Q. Discuss national policy while it is still being developed.

5. Information Dissemination scale.

(1=Not really/4=Extremely)
Important for newspaper to …

Q. Get information to the public quickly.
Q. Concentrate on news that is of interest to the widest possible audience.

6. Adversarial belief.

(1=Not really/4=Extremely)
Important for newspaper to …

Q. Be an adversary of public officials by being constantly skeptical of their actions.

7. Community Cynicism scale.

(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)

Q. It's good that residents of my community vote, but elections don't really change anything.
Q. When residents of my community write or call their elected representatives in Washington, it's really a waste of time.
Q. It's impossible to solve all the complex problems in my community. Things have gone too far.
Q. Time constrains and other job pressures make it impossible for reporters at my newspaper to consistently produce stories that will bring about positive changes in the community.
Q. Most folks in my community aren't smart enough to understand enough of the complicated details of local problems.
Q. Low voter turnout may be a sign that residents are satisfied with the status quo and don't feel a need to make changes.

8. Nonconsequentialism reliability scale.

(1=strongly disagree/7=strongly agree)

Q. My newspaper should report the facts about differences among groups but leave them alone to work out those differences.
Q. My newspaper should try to help people with different interests and ideas to understand one another.
Q. Our job is to highlight conflict, not to resolve it.
Q. The best journalism is neutral journalism.
Q. The newspaper should be a watchdog, not a discussion moderator

On the Straight and Narrative:
The Effect of Writing Style on Readers' Perceptions of News Story Quality

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Abstract

Some communication professionals suggest that the inverted pyramid is ineffective and call for a narrative approach to news. The results of this experiment show that straight-news and narrative stories often did not differ in their ability to engage readers, and, in some cases, the narrative may have been more effective. Secondary analyses revealed that story subject matter did not influence readers' assessments of story traits and that story style did not influence salience.

Introduction

A basic component of any journalism curriculum is instruction in writing style. News-writing textbooks and other news-writing aids usually begin by emphasizing a straight-news approach, then encourage students to "move beyond the inverted pyramid" toward narrative techniques that help the reader "see" the story and/or understand complex issues (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 2002, p. 186; see also Berkow & Berkow, 2000; Clark, 2000; Scanlan, 2000; Gannon, 1991). However, not everyone agrees that the narrative style is advantageous:

> The narrative lead has become all the rage…[but] narrative leads often relate some mundane moment in the life of a story subject, and fail to invoke a feeling at the outset that something significant is happening. They bring on the two most dreaded words in journalism: "Who cares?" (Haas, 1994)

At the same time, believers in the narrative approach to news encourage journalists to think of the "five Ws and the H" – who, what, when, where, why, and how – in terms of story line and character, much in the same way that authors of plays, short stories, and other works of fiction approach their work (Zahler, cited in Clark, 2000; see also Rich, 1999).

Few studies have empirically examined whether narratives "work" or whether the straight-news approach is as unappealing to readers as has been suggested (Johnson, 2001). This experiment attempted to examine these issues. Secondary, but related, analyses aimed to explore whether the subject matter of a story, as separate from writing style, had an effect on reader assessment of story traits, and to explore whether writing style influenced salience.

Background

Story style is not only the concern of educators and journalists, but also of newspaper managers, who seek to maintain and increase circulation levels. Pam Johnson of the Poynter Institute's leadership and management faculty argued that the inverted pyramid is "off- putting" to most readers while a "'feature-style' approach to all types of news … has special appeal to many at-risk readers, particularly younger people and women" (2001, online). She offered this advice to editors: "Identify and applaud 'hard news' stories that are written in the feature-style approach and, importantly, that work" effectively, adding that "many if not all of the stories chosen for … promotion should be in this style" (2001, online). Brooks et al. (2002) put the case for narrative structure this way:

> Using the inverted pyramid, we get to the point as quickly as possible. That approach saves readers' and listeners' time, but it's not the best way to tell stories. If we want to engage our readers intellectually and emotionally, if we want to inform and entertain, we must use writing techniques that promise great things to come and then fulfill that promise. To that end, we should use the devices of narration: scene re-creation, anecdotes, foreshadowing and dialogue. With these devices, we reward readers. (p. 187)

In the straight-news format, the lead sums up the story in a single paragraph and answers most of the five W and H questions – who, what, when, where, why, and how.

The "most newsworthy information comes first, with remaining information following in order of importance, with the least important at the bottom" (Scanlan 2000, p. 153).

By contrast, narrative news stories contain the "power of storytelling," including a beginning, middle, and end, allowing the writer to tell a chronological narrative complete with drama and descriptive detail. Moreover, while narratives respect traditional news values, they also consider readers' needs by aiming to hold their interest throughout a story through the use of vivid anecdotes and other devices, rather than offering mostly short, active sentences and "minor" details at the end, in the manner of the inverted pyramid (Scanlan, 2000; Rich, 1999).

Literature Review

Readers and Writing Style

Fowler (1978) argued that the inverted pyramid is actually too difficult and restricts readers' ability to process and comprehend information. He found that the readability of the newspaper front page was far below that of best-selling novels published during 1904, 1933, and 1965, and concluded that the newspaper industry should consider the consequences of "isolating large segments of the population by producing a product that is difficult to understand" (p. 592).

Studies of writing style since then have produced mixed results. Donahew (1982) compared 120 subjects' responses to traditional straight-news and narrative forms of one story – the Guyana suicides – and found that the narrative style produced significantly greater physiological arousal than the traditional style. He also found that when the narrative style contained passive verbs, it produced greater physiological arousal than the narrative version containing active verbs. Bostian (1983) tested the readability of two science news stories written in three styles – active, passive, and nominal – on 266 college students. The subjects in this study read active passages more quickly and judged those passages more interesting than both the passive and nominal passages.

At the same time, Chartprasert (1993) found that subjects rated authors who used a bureaucratic writing style (passive voice, nominal sentences, abstract and jargon-loaded vocabulary) as more intelligent, educated, and expert than authors who used simple style (active, verbal sentences; simple vocabulary). On the other hand, in a study of the use of imagery in writing, Tankard and Hendrickson (1996) found that "show sentences" were *not* seen as more "credible," contrary to the teaching of many who argue that a "telling," or straight-news style of writing, is less persuasive.

Salience and Writing Style

Studies from a range of perspectives have considered the effect of particular story characteristics on reader estimation of issue salience, or importance. For example, Gibson and Zillman (1993) found considerable support for their hypothesis that quotes could make an issue "seem to be more salient and/or compelling for the consumer of a news report" and "sway a reader's or listener's perception and judgment of an issue" (p. 794). However, Weaver, Hopkins, Billings, and Cole (1974) found no significant effect when considering the role of direct quotation in making a story seem more "informative" or "believable." Wanta and Remy (1995) examined the ability of high school students to process and recall information contained in the front pages of 20 newspapers from around the country. The researchers discovered that typical hard-news stories did not interest the students and concluded simply that readers "read, process, and recall information that interests them" (p. 122), suggesting that story subject matter might play a role in reader assessment of story traits.

Studies focusing on risk perception have probed the relationship between media reports and issue salience a bit further. While salience refers to the general importance of an issue in a reader's mind, risk perception can be considered an "ultimate" type of salience, with the news media, via providing information about the risks associated with certain types of events, influencing audience members' assessment of how important those risks are on personal and societal levels (Adam, 2000). Singer and Endreny (1987) found that "risky events are likely to be regarded as 'newsworthy' by journalistic standards and therefore to be reported in the press. Reporting, in turn, is likely to make such events more readily available to [reader] attention and recall" (p. 11). But Griffin (1999) suggested that readers' risk judgments might be influenced by writing style, including use of vivid anecdotes (as called for in the narrative style), but added that this area needs more study. Likewise, Dunwoody and Peters (1993) noted that various aspects of news-writing processes have been studied in terms of their impact on readers – for example, manipulating source use to determine reader perception of balance and fairness – but the impact of writing style on risk perception has rarely been examined.

Research Questions

With these issues in mind, this study explored the following research questions:

RQ1: Is writing style related to readers' assessments of a story in terms of its interestingness, informativeness, dullness, and other story characteristics?

RQ 2: Is story subject matter related to readers' assessments of story characteristics?

RQ 3: Is writing style related to readers' assessments of risk?

Method

Overview

Stories about crime and the environment served as the independent variables in the experiment. Stories focusing on two different subjects were used to check for the possibility that subjects might react to the story's subject matter, rather than to its writing style. Further, the subjects of crime and environment were selected because they focus on societal risks, which made it possible to draw from the literature, noted above, in creating an instrument that served to explore the impact of story style on reader assessment of risk.

The stories were drawn from actual news accounts and then treated to create one straight-news and one narrative version of a crime story, and one straight-news and one narrative version of an environment story (see Appendix A). The stories were typeset to appear identical. The straight-news version used an inverted pyramid organization with a summary lead while the narrative form contained descriptive language appealing to the senses and narrative devices such as descriptive language and soft leads. Neither version of the two story types included direct quotations in order to eliminate a possible confounding variable (Gibson & Zillman, 1993). Likewise, headlines were eliminated to control for confounding variables and to focus on the means of imparting information through writing style.

Pre-experiment 1

A pilot test was administered to a class of 37 undergraduates enrolled in an introductory journalism course. Each student randomly received a packet containing one of the following combinations of stories: straight-news crime story and narrative environment story, or narrative crime story and straight-news environment story. Unfortunately, the results of this test showed no significant differentiation between stories by the subjects, regardless of topic. This may have been because the subject of the environmental stories was ecoterrorism in the Amazon. The subject is hazy: Was the story about crime or the environment?

Pre-experiment 2

Subsequently, the ecoterrorism stories were replaced with narrative and straight-news stories about global warming, and the pilot test was repeated in another class with 35 students. The packets were distributed randomly in the manner noted above, in the first pilot test. The second test produced significant differentiation by writing style. The narrative environmental story was significantly more likely than the environmental news story to be rated more "storylike," more descriptive, more active, more emotional, and more subjective ($t = 4.2$, 33 d.f., $p < .01$). It was also significantly more likely to be judged as creative and sensory ($t = 4.5$, 33 d.f., $p < .01$).

Although the narrative crime story was not judged significantly different on all of those same variables, it was judged significantly different on key "narrative" variables: It was rated more "storylike" ($t = -3.7$, 33 d.f., $p < .01$) and significantly more likely to be judged to include creative and sensory than its straight-news counterpart ($t = 2.9$, 33 d.f., $p < .01$).

The Experiment

Participants were 117 undergraduates enrolled in two introductory communication courses at a large university. They represented a mix of academic majors and ranged in age from 18 to 26 (mean = 20.03). Of those who reported gender, 58 were females and 57 were males. Students were guaranteed anonymity and told participation would not affect their grades. The procedure was cleared through the university's human subjects process, and the instructor debriefed the students after the experiment was completed.

The versions of the news stories used in the second pre-test were used in the experiment. Using a posttest-only design, respondents were randomly assigned to one of four experimental treatment groups or a control group. Each subject read two stories: either one version of the crime story or one version of the environmental story, plus a "filler" story (a straight-news story about a plan to implement a new bar-code system in grocery stores) or, in the case of the control group, two "fillers" (the bar-code story and a straight-news filler about a state archivist's participation in an auction). An approximately equal number of participants read each story type: N for crime news = 22; N for crime narrative = 24; N for environmental news = 23; N for environmental narrative = 23; and N for control = 25.

Immediately after reading the stories, participants rated the stories by using seven-point bipolar rating scales, patterned after the semantic differential scales of Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957) and drawing from eight questions about stylistics from Tankard and Hendrickson (1996). For the bipolar adjectives, an adjective one might use to describe straight-news stories (dull) was on one end of the scale, while on the other extreme was a similar adjective (interesting) that might be used to describe narrative stories. Story interest was measured with *dull-interesting* and *unenjoyable-enjoyable* scales. Informativeness was measured with *uninformative-informative* and *unlear-clear* scales. Credibility was measured with *unbelievable-believable*, *subjective-objective* and *inaccurate-accurate* scales. A *passive-active* scale was also included.

After completing the bipolar scales, subjects turned to a questionnaire designed to measure risk perception. Eight of the questions measured environmental risk and five measured crime risk. To mask the intent of the questions, the instrument included eight "dummy" questions that asked respondents to rank their opinions of the economy, homelessness, and other issues. Finally, participants reported demographic data, including gender, media use, age, hometown (recorded by ZIP code), grade-point average, and family income.

Results

Writing style and assessment of story traits

When differences were found in the groups' ratings of story characteristics (i.e., how interesting, enjoyable, clear, informative, accurate, objective, believable or active a story was considered), the narrative story was always given higher marks on the scales. Those who read the environmental narrative story rated their version more informative, clear, and believable than did those who read the environmental straight-news story, and those who read the narrative crime story found that version more clear and active than those who read the straight-news version. In all other comparisons of style characteristics, no significant differences were found. Thus, in this experiment, changing a straight-news story's style to the narrative form did not reduce its ability to inform or involve readers, and in some cases it may have actually increased its effectiveness. (See Tables 1 and 2.)

When the control group was included in the analysis, differences were found among several of the groups' ratings of story characteristics for both crime and environmental stories. Specifically, significant differences were found in the following ratings:

- Dull/interesting: $F(4, 112) = 11.74$, $p = .000$
- Unenjoyable/enjoyable: $F(4, 112) = 8.05$, $p = .000$
- Unclear/clear: $F(4, 112) = 5.38$, $p = .001$
- Uninformative/informative: $F(4, 112) = 4.54$, $p = .002$
- Unbelievable/believable: $F(4, 112) = 4.05$, $p = .004$
- Passive/active: $F(4, 111) = 3.14$, $p = .017$

The Tukey HSD post hoc showed that many of these differences were among the treatment groups and the control group, but in an independent samples t-test comparison of those receiving the crime straight-news and crime narrative treatments (excluding the control group), significant differences were found on the ratings of story clarity and passivity. On clarity, $t = 2.5$, 44 d.f., $p < .05$, with the narrative group reporting greater story clarity: $M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.405$ for the straight-news group and $M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.062$ for the narrative group. On passivity, with $t = -2.06$, 44 d.f., $p < .05$, the narrative group reported that the story was more active ($M = 5.167$, $SD = 1.31$) than the straight-news group ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.49$).

As noted, significant differences were found among the groups reading the narrative and straight-news environmental stories and their assessment of story informativeness, clarity, and believability. On informativeness, $t = -1.98$, 44 d.f., $p < .05$; on clarity, $t = -2.03$, 44 d.f., $p < .05$; on believability, $t = -2.13$, 44 d.f., $p < .05$.

The narrative group rated their story more informative, clear and believable than did the straight news group, with M = 4.67, SD = 1.06 for the straight-news group and M = 5.3 and SD = 1.02 for the narrative group in informativeness; on clarity, for the straight-news group, M = 4.96, SD = 1.26, while for the narrative group M = 5.61, SD = .89; and on believability for the straight-news group, M = 5.35, SD = 1.34, and for the narrative group M = 6.09, SD = .99.

Subject matter and assessment of story traits

Next, an analysis was performed to test for the impact of story subject matter (crime and environment) – as separate from story style – on subjects' assessment of story traits. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that subjects' ratings of four story traits differed significantly. Specifically, the ANOVA results were:

- Dull/interesting: F (1, 90) = 6.321, p = .014
- Uninformative/informative: F (1, 90) = 8.143, p = .005
- Inaccurate/accurate: F (1, 90) = 8.542, p = .004
- Unbelievable/believable: F (1, 90) = 9.365, p = .003

Then, a reverse analysis was performed to test for the impact of story style (straight news and narrative) – as separate from story subject matter – on subjects' assessment of story traits. A one-way ANOVA revealed results for the impact of story style alone that were similar to results for the impact of story subject matter alone. Again, this analysis revealed that subjects' ratings of four story traits differed significantly. Specifically, the ANOVA results were:

- Dull/interesting: F (1, 90) = 5.555, p = .021
- Uninformative/informative: F (1, 90) = 4.871, p = .030

- Inaccurate/accurate: F (1, 90) = 5.846, p = .018
- Unbelievable/believable: F (1, 90) = 7.359, p = .008.

An examination of the means (Tables 3 and 4) shows that the subjects rated the environmental stories as less interesting than the crime stories and rated the narrative stories as less interesting than the straight-news stories. However, they rated the environmental stories and the narrative stories as more informative, more accurate, and more believable than the crime stories and the straight-news stories. Possible reasons for these findings are discussed below.

Writing style and risk assessment

No significant differences were found in the treatment groups' risk assessments, with one exception – subjects' perception of personal homicide risk. Thus, the narrative version of a crime or environmental or crime story had no less impact, in terms of affecting risk assessment among treatment groups, than did the hard news story.

Those who read the straight-news version of the crime story had a higher assessment of their personal risk of homicide (M = 3.05, SD = 1.68) than did those who read the narrative version of the crime story (M = 2.25, SD = .944). In this comparison, a Levene's Test for Equality of Variances yielded significant results (F = 6.452, p < .05), leading to a rejection of the null hypothesis that the variances of the populations from which the groups were sampled were equal. If the variances are thus assumed to be unequal, then t = 1.96, 32.489 d.f., p > .05, and no significant result is achieved. In this case the inequality of the variances could be due to the composition of the different classes.[1] In comparisons of the control group and both sets of the treatment groups, with the exception of the homicide risk variable, no significant differences were found. When the control group was compared to those who read the crime story, for the homicide risk variable, $t = 2.13$, 44 d.f., $p < .05$. Those who read the homicide narrative story were less likely to assess themselves at risk for homicide ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .944$) than were members of the control group ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .567$).

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[1] Two classes were involved in the experiment. Among readers of the crime news story, a significant difference was found between the classes on their assessment of homicide risk. Among readers of the crime narrative story, significant

Discussion

The answer to RQ1 – is writing style related to reader assessment of story characteristics? – is "yes." Significant differences were found in a total of five of 16 t-tests, and in each of these the narrative style was rated "better" than the straight news style. Thus the narrative style was neither no less nor no more effective than straight-news style in most cases, and more effective in all other cases. These findings may be important for reporters and editors as they consider whether "hard" or "soft" approaches are better, particularly for those reporters or editors who feel that they may be sacrificing clarity or impact when they adopt a narrative style. One goal of narrative reporting is to tell the story in a way that is clearer, more believable, more interesting, and more enjoyable than the "rote" news story. At the same time, editors do not want to sacrifice content through the use of the form; for editors and reporters attempting to give readers a fresh approach to the news, it is important that a narrative story should have at least the same impact as a news story. The results of this experiment suggest that that goal can be achieved.

In regard to RQ2 – is story subject matter related to reader assessment of story traits? – the answer is an unequivocal "maybe." Although the relationship between

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differences were found between the classes on their assessment of global and national crime problems. Among readers of the environmental narrative story, a significant difference was found on their assessment of in-state environmental subject matter and subjects' assessment of story traits was significant for four of the eight bipolar ratings, the second test measuring the impact of story style alone showed nearly identical results. This suggests the possibility that readers came to the stories with preconceived ideas about the story subject matter, the story style, or both, something that this experiment did not measure. At least one previous study suggests that narrative stories carry more credibility with readers (Chartprasert 1993), which could explain the subjects' higher ratings for narratives on the traits of informativeness, accuracy, and believability. Further, although the narrative story was rated more informative, more accurate, and more believable than the straight-news story, it was rated as *less interesting* than the straight-news story. This could possibly be attributed to reader habits: The news story moves at a faster pace than the narrative, which matches the speed of much news today in light of news managers' efforts to accommodate audiences whose time is limited.

Finally, environmental topics are considered unobtrusive, meaning that most people lack personal experience with environmental problems and so rely on the news media for information about them (Ader, 1995; Behr & Iyengar, 1985; Eyal, Winter, & DeGeorge, 1981; Zucker, 1978). Thus it could be that the subjects' higher ratings for the environmental stories on the traits of informativeness, accuracy, and believability stem from their reliance on the news media for information about environmental issues. By contrast, most people have access to information about crime that goes beyond news media reports, including many nightly television dramas that focus on crime and regular reminders about safety that are disseminated by law enforcement and other public safety offices. Similarly, personal knowledge of crime could have caused readers to rank the crime story more interesting than the environmental story.

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warming. An ANCOVA conducted to eliminate the effects of separate classes revealed no significant differences.

In regard to RQ3 – is story style related to risk assessment? – measuring the impact of the story type through questions about risk perception yielded no significant differences, with the exception of homicide risk. This could suggest that the straight-news story and the narrative story have similar levels of impact, but these results may also reflect the difficulty in revealing any sort of impact through a single exposure. Gerbner's cultivation theory suggests that media messages shape the way we perceive the world; three decades of research led Gerbner (1992) to conclude that those who watch a lot of television are more likely to believe that their neighborhoods are unsafe, crime rates are rising, and their own chance of victimization is higher than it really is. While Gerbner focused on television drama, other researchers have correlated newspaper reports of hazards with salience, including a study by Combs and Slovic (1979), who studied the reporting of 41 causes of death and compared this with subjects' estimates of the frequencies of those causes of death. They found that respondents tended to overestimate causes of death that were, in fact, more rare than demographic data indicated, suggesting a correlation between media message and audience risk perception.

In summary, cultivation and salience are often built through repeated exposures and it might be unrealistic to expect one story to influence perceptions of risk among treatment groups. Trumbo (1995) states that a scientific-technical issue may be made salient by its repetition in the news, a variety of the priming effect: "In this case the audience member may call upon previously formed opinions of similar issues … and use these evaluations as a basis for the evaluation of the current issue" (p. 13). Global warming, the subject of the environmental story, has been in the news since the late 1970s and, at the time of this study, was making headlines in view of the international treaty on global warming (the Kyoto Treaty). Further, Singer and Endreny (1993) write that communicating about risk goes beyond readers' perception of risk based solely upon the news media. Rather, risk perception may form as the result of news media information, interpersonal communication, and personal experience. In an effort to keep the questionnaire of manageable length, no questions were asked about the subjects' previous knowledge of the issues that were tested. Such knowledge may be particularly important when considering such issues as crime or the environment in an experimental setting such as the one undertaken by this study.

Suggestions for Further Research

This experiment set out to determine the impact of writing style on reader assessment of story characteristics, and the findings provide evidence for continued encouragement of the use of the narrative style. Its secondary findings, while offering no firm conclusions, offer clear suggestions for future study. An experiment that includes, for example, a repeated measures design as well as a questionnaire designed to determine subjects' previous exposure to and attitudes about the topics of crime and the environment would have the potential to dig more deeply into the nuances of the impact of style on readers' assessment not only of story traits, but also on their risk perception. Given that communication studies show that, for environmental issues at least, the public is dependent on the news media to a large degree to assess personal and societal risk, it seems important to continue probing the impact of writing style on not only reader perception of story interest, believability, and other traits, but also on such elements as risk perception.

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TABLE 1
READER RATINGS OF CHARACTERISTICS IN CRIME NEWS AND NARRATIVE STORIES*

Story Characteristic	Treatment	N	Mean	S.D.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Dull/Interesting	News	22	5.3636	1.29267	.081	44	0.936
	Narrative	24	5.3333	1.23945			
	Control	25	3.0400	1.33791			
Uninformative/ Informative	News	22	4.5000	1.28303	1.121	44	.268
	Narrative	24	4.0417	1.48848			
	Control	25	3.9600	1.30639			
Subjective/ Objective	News	22	4.2727	1.48586	.631	44	.531
	Narrative	24	4.0000	1.44463			
	Control	25	4.0400	1.42829			
Unclear/Clear	News	22	4.5455	1.40500	-2.499	44	.016
	Narrative	24	5.4583	1.06237			
	Control	25	4.1200	1.73973			
Passive/Active	News	22	4.3182	1.49241	-2.055	44	.046
	Narrative	24	5.1667	1.30773			
	Control	25	3.8800	1.61555			
Unenjoyable/ Enjoyable	News	22	4.5455	1.10096	.220	44	.827
	Narrative	24	4.4583	1.53167			
	Control	25	2.6400	1.41067			
Inaccurate/ Accurate	News	22	4.3162	1.32328	.067	44	.947
	Narrative	24	4.2917	1.36666			
	Control	24	4.5833	1.38051			
Unbelievable/ Believable	News	22	4.8636	1.83343	.311	44	.757
	Narrative	24	4.7083	1.54580			
	Control	25	4.5200	1.71075			

TABLE 2
READER RATINGS OF CHARACTERISTICS IN ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS AND NARRATIVE STORIES

Story Characteristic	Treatment	N	MEAN	S. D.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Dull/Interesting	News	23	4.1739	1.58551	-1.761	44	.085
	Narrative	23	5.0000	1.59545			
	Control	25	3.0400	1.33791			
Uninformative/ Informative	News	23	4.6957	1.06322	-1.982	44	.054
	Narrative	23	5.3043	1.01957			
	Control	25	3.9600	1.30639			
Subjective/ Objective	News	23	4.0870	1.47442	-.513	44	.610
	Narrative	23	4.3043	1.39593			
	Control	25	4.0400	1.42829			
Unclear/Clear	News	23	4.9565	1.26053	-2.026	44	.049
	Narrative	23	5.6087	.89133			
	Control	25	4.1200	1.73973			
Passive/Active	News	23	4.7826	.99802	.159	43	.874
	Narrative	22	4.7273	1.31590			
	Control	25	3.8800	1.61555			
Unenjoyable/ Enjoyable	News	23	4.0870	1.27611	-.827	44	.413
	Narrative	23	4.4348	1.56165			
	Control	25	2.6400	1.41067			
Inaccurate/ Accurate	News	23	4.8696	1.01374	-1.033	44	.307
	Narrative	23	5.1739	.98406			
	Control	24	4.5833	1.38051			
Unbelievable/ Believable	News	23	5.3478	1.33514	-2.128	44	.039
	Narrative	23	6.0870	.99604			
	Control	25	4.5200	1.71075			

TABLE 3
IMPACT OF SUBJECT MATTER ON READER RATINGS OF STORY CHARACTERISTICS

Story Characteristic	N	Mean	S.D.
Dull/Interesting			
Crime	46	5.3478	1.2511
Environment	46	4.5870	1.6272
Uninformative/ Informative	46	4.2609	1.3894
Crime	46	5.0000	1.0750
Environment			
Inaccurate/Accurate			
Crime	46	4.3043	1.3312
Environment	46	5.0217	0.9998
Unbelievable/Believable			
Crime	46	4.7826	1.6722
Environment	46	5.7174	1.2232

TABLE 4
IMPACT OF STYLE ON READER RATINGS OF STORY CHARACTERISTICS

Story Characteristic	N	Mean	S.D.
Dull/Interesting			
News	45	5.3333	1.2613
Narrative	47	4.6170	1.6226
Uninformative/ Informative	45	4.3333	1.3143
News	47	4.9149	1.2128
Narrative			
Inaccurate/Accurate			
News	45	4.3556	1.2996
Narrative	47	4.9574	1.0826
Unbelievable/Believable			
News	45	4.8222	1.6691
Narrative	47	5.6596	1.2731

APPENDIX A

Narrative Crime Story

By Pat Jones
Associated Press

His lawyer called out his name. He stood up, put his hand on the leather Bible and swore to tell the truth and nothing but. He sat down on the witness box and looked toward the jurors so they could see his face and study it and decide for themselves what kind of man he was.

In measured tones he told the jury that he did not murder Karen Gregory, his 26-year-old neighbor.

He heard a scream that night, he said. He heard it, and he went out to the street to look around. He saw a man he did not know, standing over in Karen's yard. The man said to go away, to not tell anyone what he'd seen. He waited for the man to leave – watched him walk away into the darkness – and then he went up to Karen's house. There was broken glass on the front walk. He knocked on the front door. There was no answer. He found an open bedroom window. He called out to ask whether anyone needed help. There was still no answer. He looked through the window and saw someone lying on the floor. He decided he had to go in. He climbed inside, and there was Karen. Blood was everywhere. He could even smell the blood.

He was afraid. He ran to the bathroom and threw up, and tasted his vomit. He knew no one would believe how he had ended up standing inside that house with her body. He had to get out of there. He was running toward the window to climb out when he saw something moving in the dark. He thought someone was jumping toward him. Then he realized he was looking at a mirror, and the only person moving was him. It was his own reflection that had startled him. It was George Lewis.

By now the members of the jury knew the facts of the case. Karen Gregory had gone to a friend's house for dinner on a Tuesday night and had gone home after midnight. It was past 1 a.m. when someone attacked her inside her house. There was a terrible struggle that went from room to room. Karen was stabbed repeatedly around her neck. Her hands were cut and bruised, apparently from trying to fend off the blows, and the index finger on her left hand was broken. She escaped at one point, running to the front porch. There, she either stumbled or was pushed, and her head rammed through the windows of the front door, knocking shards of glass onto the walk. It was there on the porch, police believed, that she screamed. She screamed so loudly that more than a dozen neighbors heard her. One said she thought it was cats. Others thought someone was having a nightmare. Some simply didn't know what to make of the cry. But none of them called the police, and Karen's attacker forced her back into the house and finished killing her.

Police found a footprint in the blood. Weeks of investigation, of attempting to match the print with suspects' shoes, were fruitless. But one afternoon they questioned George Lewis, a neighbor of Karen's and a local firefighter, and found that he admitted to finding Karen's body. But he had told no one about it because, he said, he was afraid. One of his shoes matched the footprint, and he was arrested and charged with murder.

The jury came back at night. It was close to midnight and they looked exhausted. George Lewis stood up and faced them. Karen's friends and relatives stared at George Lewis.

The foreman was somber, but some of the other jurors had faint smiles. George Lewis' attorney knew what that meant. The jury had believed George's story. He was found not guilty.

He slumped forward, sobbing. Karen's mother, in the first row of spectators, also wept. George Lewis, 33, walked slowly out of the courtroom, surrounded by reporters and photographers.

By Pat Jones
Associated Press

A local firefighter was found innocent yesterday of killing his 26-year-old neighbor two years ago.

George W. Lewis, 33, who was charged in the stabbing death of Karen Gregory, testified in his murder trial that he stumbled upon her body by accident, then failed to report the finding to police because he was afraid. The not guilty verdict in local criminal court came after nine hours of deliberations and was handed down shortly before midnight.

The case became notorious locally because neighbors told police they heard Gregory's screams, but some misinterpreted the screams as the call of cats or the cries of a woman having a nightmare. None called police.

Lewis told reporters after the verdict that he was sorry for the suffering of Gregory's family but reiterated his innocence.

In his testimony and in his account to police, Lewis said he came upon Gregory's body after hearing a scream.

After going out in the street to look around, Lewis testified, he saw a stranger standing in Gregory's yard. The man told Lewis to not tell anyone what he had seen. Lewis said he waited for the man to leave, and when he investigated he saw broken glass on the front walk of Gregory's house.

Lewis testified that he knocked on the front door but got no answer. At the side of the house, he said, he found an open bedroom window, then called out to ask whether anyone needed help.

After he received no answer, he looked through the window and saw someone lying on the floor. He entered the house by climbing in the window and found Gregory's body, surrounded by a pool of blood.

Lewis told jurors he was so afraid at the sight that he threw up. He said that he thought no one would believe that he had been in the house by accident, so he fled, but only after being frightened by his own reflection in a mirror.

A lengthy police investigation revealed that Gregory had gone to a friend's house for dinner on a Tuesday night and had gone home after midnight. It was past 1 a.m. when she was attacked inside her house.

Investigators found evidence of a struggle. She had been stabbed repeatedly around her neck. Her hands were cut and bruised, apparently from trying to fend off the blows, and the index finger on her left hand was broken.

At her front porch, she either stumbled or was pushed, and her head went through the windows of the front door, knocking glass onto the walk.

Police found a footprint in the blood inside the house, but weeks of investigation yielded few suspects. However, after they questioned Lewis, he admitted to finding Karen's body. He said he had told no one about the find because he was afraid of becoming a suspect. Police determined that one of his shoes matched the footprint, and he was arrested and charged with murder.

As the verdict was read, Gregory's friends and relatives stared at Lewis.

When the not guilty verdict was announced, both Lewis and Karen's mother, in the first row of spectators, wept. Lewis left the courtroom amid a crowd of friends, relatives, reporters and photographers.

Narrative Environmental Story

By Pat Jones
Associated Press

All day, Greg Spaulding has been observing the surgeonfish streaming over the reef. Now, as the sun sets, he watches as scores of the fish meet and unite to form banners of yellow and blue, flowing gaudily over the contours of the coral. Here, the fish bunch into groups of 10 or 20 individuals, the groups rising above the reefs, swarming and butting against one another.

What seems to be chaos is actually part of nature's plan. The fish need the coral reefs to spawn, as well as ensure the survival of their species.

Spaulding reaches over the side of his boat and splashes cool water over his face. The saltwater stings his sunburned cheeks, but he revels in the taste and smell of it. As he prepares to head toward shore, he sighs.

How long the surgeonfish spawning ground will last is anyone's guess. Older than the prairies or flowering plants, coral reefs have suffered and survived enormous changes throughout the centuries. But today, they face an unprecedented challenge. Global warming, an increase in the Earth's air temperature because of increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide, has already helped destroy a quarter of the world's reefs. The reefs that remain are crucial to the survival of island communities all over the globe, yet they are in such great peril that governments are preparing to relocate millions of island residents.

Humans cause the assaults on the reefs, but they go largely unnoticed, occurring in the mysterious underwater realm where few people, it seems, understand or care what happens. It is Spaulding's daunting task to help people understand and care, before it is too late.

Spaulding is part of Ocean Watch, a nonprofit organization whose membership includes scientists from all over the world. They are studying the impacts of global warming on the seas and are urging governments to quickly implement heavy-handed policies to curb pollution

The marine biologist knows that it can take years to see even a small part of all that the reef has to offer. And see is about all humans can do, though there is a wealth of other information adrift in the sea from electromagnetic fields, subsonic noise, and chemical tastes and smells. The ocean's residents can read signals hidden to man: the smell of a fish's anxiety, the taste of water just filtered through a sponge, the sound of a whale calling hundreds of miles away.

Like the wonders of the reef, most of its troubles are also beyond direct sensory experience. It is next to impossible to judge the effects of the Jet Ski that tears by overhead, of the fuel that leaks from its engine, of the impact of its noise pollution on marine life, or of decisions made half a world away that allow polluting industries to pollute more, or drivers of sport-utility vehicles to use them, though they have no emissions-control devices in their engines.

Emissions from the developed world have contributed to the Earth's warming, which, in turn, has helped bring the corals to their possible extinction. As the global climate changes, sea temperatures throughout the tropics rise too. Coral cannot survive in water that is too warm. At the higher temperatures, corals turn a ghostly white. Although they may survive a few months like this, they eventually die and turn to dust.

The impact on those who live alongside coral reefs is devastating. Without reefs, many fishes and shellfishes disappear, leaving people hungry and malnourished. Without reefs, entire islands have disappeared, and may disappear, underwater. Reefs form a stronghold between the land and the sea, defending people and their homes from the onslaughts of typhoons

Despite the bleak picture, Spaulding knows that time has proven that the reefs are tough. Geologic records show that the reefs have vanished before, only to re-emerge again, as long as the sun delivers its rays and the waters flow.

As he moors his boat, Spaulding takes comfort in this thought. His reverie is short-lived, however. As he watches the last of the sun's rays disappear, he remembers this: It is clear that reefs can survive without man. But it is unclear, just yet, whether the opposite is true.

Straight-News Environmental Story

By Pat Jones
Associated Press

Coral reefs are in danger of disappearing permanently because of global warming, a marine biologist said today.

The warming of the Earth's air temperature has caused a warming of the seas, leading to water temperatures too high in some regions for the reefs to survive, said Gregory Spaulding, a marine biologist with the Metcalf Institute.

If the reefs disappear, it would likely mean an end to many of the world's islands, Spaulding said. Not only would island communities lose an important source of food – reefs support fish and shellfish, which island people use as food or sell to world markets – but they would also lose the protection that reefs provide.

Coral reefs protect islands from typhoons, which can sink islands standing in their wake, he said.

Spaulding is part of Ocean Watch, a nonprofit organization whose membership includes scientists from all over the world. They are studying the impacts of global warming on the seas and are urging governments to quickly implement heavy-handed policies to curb pollution.

Global warming is caused by concentrations of carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide comes from industrial pollution and car exhaust, among other sources.

Spaulding studies reefs where coral bleaching – coral that has turned a ghostly white, indicating that it is sick and dying – has been noticed, but not progressed to the point at which the reef is entirely in risk.

The marine biologist said that most people are unaware of the life that coral reefs support and of the habits of aquatic life. The ocean's residents can read signals hidden to man, such as the smell of a fish's anxiety, the taste of water just filtered through a sponge, the sound of a whale calling hundreds of miles away, Spaulding said.

It isn't clear how the noise from a Jet Ski, or the fuel that leaks from its engine, impacts marine life, and it is difficult to definitely determine that pollution from industries and automobiles a half a world away are the direct cause of the demise of coral reefs, he said.

But the evidence shows that these activities are contributing to global warming, which is also warming the seas – and this is leading to a struggle for the coral reefs, one that could result in their extinction, he said.

Geologic records show that the reefs have vanished before, only to re-emerge again.

But Spaulding said that geology only tells us that the reefs can survive without man.

It is unclear whether the reefs can survive with man, he said.

The Impact of Public Ownership, Profits and Competition on Number of Newsroom Employees and Starting Salaries in Mid-Sized Daily Newspapers

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Abstract

The Impact of Public Ownership, Profits and Competition on Number of Newsroom Employees and Starting Salaries in Mid-Sized Daily Newspapers

By

Alan Blanchard and Stephen Lacy

This study of 77 dailies between 25,000 and 100,000 circulation found publicly held daily newspapers produced higher profit margins than did privately held dailies. Public ownership and higher profits were associated with smaller newsroom staffs. Public ownership was positively related with starting salaries. Also the presence of competition was positively correlated with newsroom size and starting salary. The impact of profitability on newsroom size was progressively greater for newspapers with higher than average profit margins.

The Impact of Public Ownership, Profits and Competition on the Number of Newsroom Employees and Starting Salaries in Mid-Sized Daily Newspapers

The unexpected resignation in early 2001 of Jay Harris as publisher of the *San Jose Mercury News* drew attention to a newspaper industry trend that began more than 40 years earlier. Harris resigned over budget cuts by parent company Knight Ridder. Part of the motive behind the required cuts was the need to maintain profit levels expected of publicly held corporations by stock analysts and institutional investors.[1]

Although Harris' resignation surprised many, researchers have been investigating the impact of ownership on newspapers for several decades.[2] More recently, research has investigated the impact of public ownership on newspaper performance.[3]

The trend toward increased control of newspaper companies by outside interests was one of two trends that reshaped the newspaper industry during the last half of the 20th century. The other trend is the decline of competition among daily newspapers. By 2001, fewer than a dozen markets had separately owned and operated daily newspapers within a city and another 13 cities had joint operating agreements, exemptions to antitrust laws that allow two newspapers to combine all functions except the newsrooms.[4] Although intracity daily newspaper competition has all but disappeared, competition among dailies within counties and across county lines continues,[5] and competition among dailies and weeklies continue as well.[6] However, increasing efforts by newspaper companies to own dailies and weeklies in the same extended geographic area, called clustering, threatens the surviving newspaper competition.[7]

Despite existing research about public ownership and competition, only one study has examined the relationship between these two variables and newspaper performance. Lacy, Shaver and St. Cyr found that public ownership was correlated with lower newsroom budgets, but that competition was a countervailing force. [8] As the percentage of group newspapers in counties with other daily newspapers increases, the percentage of revenue devoted to the newsroom budget at publicly held newspapers increased.

The purpose of the study is to examine the impact of public ownership and competition on profit levels and then to examine how these variables relate to number of newsroom employees and starting salaries for reporters. Exploring such relationships is important because evaluation and criticism of press performance will promote better understanding when it stems from an empirical foundation of how newspaper companies conduct themselves and how external factors, such as competition, constrain that conduct.

Background

This section will address the role of ownership and ownership type on daily newspaper conduct and then the impact of competition on daily newspaper conduct. Finally, it will present the hypotheses that were derived from the first two sections.

Ownership

The impact of ownership on newspapers has received a great deal of scholarly attention during the last 40 years, but the approach of early research was often atheoretical, concentrating on the decline of the independent, family owned newspapers and the growth of newspaper groups.[9] Recent, more sophisticated studies have aimed to examine differences in performance between independent and group newspapers, although limited differences have been found.[10]

During the 1990s, Demers integrated organizational and ownership variables into a concept he called the corporate newspaper. He said the claim that corporate newspapers negatively affect journalism is overstated. In his book, Demers emphasized corporate structure and did not consider variations that might be connected to public versus private ownership.[11] In a follow-up study, Demers found that the structural complexity of a daily newspaper had a moderate correlation with the critical content as perceived by city officials.[12] Public ownership was included as one measure of Demers' ownership structure variable. However, this variable only correlated slightly with two of the four other measures of a corporate newspaper, which indicates that the complexity of a newspaper's structure and public ownership may not measure the same theoretical construct.

Research into the impact of public ownership began as early as the 1980s when Meyers surveyed newspaper financial analysts, publishers, editors and newsroom staff at public and private dailies to see how they evaluated newspapers. They found no difference between journalists at public and private newspapers with regard to how they evaluated newspaper performance.[13] The difference between this study and more recent studies may reflect changes within newspaper corporations over time or differences in data collection methods.

In a 1992 survey of publishers at privately and publicly held daily newspapers, Matthews found that publishers at privately owned newspapers believed they had more managerial autonomy than did publishers at publicly owned newspapers. She also concluded that publishers at publicly owned newspapers face more corporate control and more pressure to increase revenues than do publishers at privately owned newspapers.[14]

Blankenburg and Ozanich looked at the relationship between outside control of stock in newspaper corporations and found the degree of outside ownership affected financial performance of the companies.[15] For example, as outside ownership increased, profit margins increased. The Blankenburg and Ozanich study was replicated in 1996 with similar results.[16] Again, increased public ownership was positively correlated with increased profit margins.

A study by Martin found similar results for 1988 and 1998. As inside control of publicly held groups decreased, profit margins increased.[17]

In 2001, Granberg, Bezanson and Soloski presented a long list of potential effects of public ownership on newspaper performance.[18] They state:

> For public companies (with but few exceptions), the business of news is business, not news. Their papers are managed and controlled for financial performance, not news quality.[19]

Even though the book is based on extensive data about publicly held newspapers, it proceeds from a limited foundation of economic and managerial theory and did not adequately consider the impact of some constraining variables, such as competition from other newspapers for readership.

Although seldom articulated, the impact of ownership stems from organizational goals and their relationship to performance. Lacy and Simon explained that organizational goals could vary greatly even within type of newspaper (private versus public ownership, and group versus nongroup). They also said that environmental factors can constrain organizational goals.[20]

The reasoning behind the impact of public ownership on newspaper performance is based on the scattered and decentralized nature of public ownership. Newspaper company goals must react to the expectation of the stock market, where investors are interested in financial performance such as stock prices and profit margins.[21] This reasoning is consistent with research that found profit margins of publicly held newspaper corporations increased as the amount of outside control increased.

Competition

Research into the impact of competition on newspaper performance began in the 1940s,[22] but it was 1986 before mass communication scholars developed a theoretical basis for its impact. Two studies examining national samples found a relationship between intracity daily competition and the amount of money spent on the newsroom.[23] Called the "financial commitment theory" by Litman and Bridges,[24] this relationship was formalized in two later articles.[25]

In 1992, Lacy reviewed research in the area and concluded that the bulk of research supported the hypothesis that intense competition resulted in greater expenditures on the newsroom for intracity newspaper competition, intercity newspaper competition, and local television news competition.[26]

Two recent studies indicated that competition can affect newsroom expenditures. Martin found that clustering was associated with reduced newsroom spending.[27] Cho used the financial commitment model to study local daily newspapers in Japan and found that in intensely competitive markets, competition led to increased financial commitment in Japanese local dailies.[28]

Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski concluded that competition has little impact on news quality. They stated:

> Because of increasing concentration of newspapers in the hands of large companies, competition among newspapers based on the quality of news is

> diminishing. The terms of competition have little or nothing to do with news quality--the quality of the product produced by the firm--in most markets today.[29]

However, the book does not cite existing research about competition. Nor does it define what type of competition was being address by this statement. Furthermore, the evidence supporting this position was not clearly presented.

The only published empirical study that looked at the relationship of both public ownership and competition to newspaper financial performance found an almost equal impact of competition and percentage of outside control on percentage of revenues spent on the newsroom.[30]

Studies indicate that the overall impact of competition on newsroom expenditures is the opposite of public ownership. Public ownership tends to reduce newsroom expenditures and competition tends to increase it.

Hypotheses

This study will test the following hypotheses based on existing literature and theory.

H1: *Publicly held daily newspapers will have higher profit margins than privately owned daily newspapers.*

H2: *As daily competition within a daily newspaper's county increases, profit margins will decrease.*

H3: *As profit margins increase, the number of newsroom employees will decrease.*

H4: *As profit margins increase, starting salaries for reporters will decrease.*

H5: *As daily competition within a daily newspaper's county increases, the number of newsroom employees will increase.*

H6: *Publicly held daily newspapers will have fewer newsroom employees than privately owned daily newspapers.*

H7: Publicly held daily newspapers will have lower starting salaries for reporters than privately owned daily newspapers.

In addition to the seven hypotheses, this study will answer the following research question.

RQ1: *Does the impact of profit margins and public ownership on starting salaries and number of employees become progressively greater as newspaper profits exceed average profit margins?*

Another way to phrase this question is whether or not the relationship is linear between the independent variables public ownership and profit and the dependent variables starting salary and number of employees in the newsroom. Linear relationships are additive in nature, with increases in one unit of an independent variable leading to consistent increases in the level of a dependent variable. With progressively greater relationships, the changes in the dependent variable would become sequentially greater with increasing units of the independent variable. The authors could find no published research about this question.

Method

Data were collected with a summer 2001 survey of managing editors at all daily newspapers with circulations between 25,000 to 110,000, except for those with union contracts in the newsroom. Newsrooms with union contracts typically receive higher wages than those without contracts, and the contracts often include minimum starting salaries. Union contracts alter the discretion of managers at these newspapers to determine starting salaries.

The range of newspapers was limited because surveys asking news organization managers for financial data often result in low response rates,[31] and the authors feared a survey of the entire range of newspapers might create statistical problems due to unusually high variation among the full range of daily newspapers. Also, the limited financial resources available for the survey created the need to limit the sample, and therefore, the population.

The 2001 *Editor & Publisher International Year Book* identified 281 dailies the population description. These dailies came from 45 of the 50 states. The survey was conducted in three waves. The first included a letter, questionnaire and return stamped envelope. The second wave consisted of a postcard reminding the respondents of the survey. The third wave included the letter, questionnaire and return envelope.

Out of 281 managing editors who received the questionnaire, 105 editors returned questionnaires for a response rate of 37%.[32] This low rate might reflect the sensitivity of the data the managing editors were asked to provide.

The one-page questionnaire asked the following questions:

*What is your newspaper's paid circulation?

*On average, what would a beginning reporter earn annually at your newspaper?

*How many full-time reporters and editors work in your newsroom?

*How many part-time reporters and editors work in your newsroom?

*Please circle one of these 11 ranges that best describes your newspaper's percentage of profitability (profit margin = revenue minus expenses divided by revenues) for year 2000?

0-5%
6%-10%
11%-15%
16%-20%
21%-25%
26%-30%
31%-35%
36%-40%
41%-45%
46%-50%
51% or more

The managing editors also were asked to make comment relevant to the survey's purpose.

The number of newsroom employees was selected as a dependent variable because labor accounts for the highest proportion of newsroom budgets, and research indicates that ownership, competition and profits are related to newsroom budgets.

Starting salaries for reporters was selected because newspapers are notorious for having low starting salaries,[33] and because newsroom budgets are related to profit levels, starting salaries may be affected by profit margins as well.

Public ownership was a dummy variable, with public newspapers defined as those with publicly traded stocks. These are listed in Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski.[34]

Competition was calculated by summing the penetration of all other dailies in a daily's county. The assumption is that as the percentage of households subscribing to another daily increases, the more likely these newspapers will be considered acceptable substitutes by readers of the daily being studied. It addition, it is assumed that higher penetration of other dailies in a county makes these other dailies more acceptable as substitutes for advertisers. In effect, higher penetration of other dailies suggests a high cross-elasticity of demand in the circulation and advertising markets. This measure has been used as a competition measure in other studies.[35] The data for this variable was taken from Standard Rate and Data Service *Circulation 2001*.[36]

Of the 105 editors responding to the survey, 78 managing editors provided their profit margin range and 27 declined. The percentage of the original 281 managing editors who provided their financial data equaled 28%. This limited response rate is not surprising given the tendency of newspaper managers not to reveal their profit margins.[37] It does suggest limitations in generalizing from this sample to all newspapers within the 25,000 to 100,000 circulation range.

Newspaper profit is a ratio measure, however, here it was broken into 10 intervals with a 5% range and an eleventh response category of more than 51%. This was done to reduce the chance of memory error by the respondents, while retaining as much as possible the equal intervals between the numbers. In effect, the effort was to approximate interval relationships between the responses so that regression analysis could be used. The ability to maintain the equal distance was based on none of these newspapers having profits in excess of 51%, which proved to be correct for the respondents' newspapers.

Inferential statistics will not be used because this was an effort at a census, and the newspapers were not a representative sample of any other daily newspapers. Regression coefficients will be used to evaluate the relationships between variables because they demonstrate the predicted change in the dependent variable for each unit change in the independent variable.

Despite the limited response rate, data about individual newspaper's profits are extremely rare, and the data in this study allow an examination of important relationships for the understanding of newspaper economics and management. If the results are consistent with theory and previous research, they will add to the body of knowledge about this relationship.

The hypotheses were tested using ordinary least-squares multiple regression. Data were tested for the assumptions of the procedure. Outliers were found in three variables:

full-time employees (three), part-time employees (one), and full-time equivalent employees (five). The outliers were reassigned the values of three standard deviations from the mean. This was done to retain the cases while reducing their inordinate influence.[38] The data also were tested for violation of assumptions of homoscedasticity, multicollinearity and singularity. The data were within acceptable limits.

Results

Table 1 summarizes the data from the 77 managers who supplied their profit margins. One case was dropped because data were missing from another variable. The data are broken down by privately held (38) and publicly held (40) newspapers. The privately held newspapers averaged 51,290 circulation, compared to 46,065 for the publicly held newspapers. Several comparisons of the two types of newspapers suggest the probable outcome of the regression analysis. First, despite having smaller circulations, the mean starting salary for publicly held newspapers was $787 more per year ($25,690 for public and $24,903 for private), but there was slightly more variation among the private newspapers with a standard deviation of $3,526 versus $3,078 for public newspapers.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

The higher starting salary for publicly held newspapers might be explained by the fact that they had fewer full-time newsroom staff on average (45.23) than did privately held newspapers (51.75). The private newspapers had greater variation in full-time employees (standard deviation equaled 34.52) than did public newspapers (standard deviation equaled 20.64). Although the survey did not ask for the total labor budget, it is likely that the private newspapers spent more on their newsroom labor than did the public newspapers. Having 6.52 more employees probably resulted in higher budgets at private dailies than did having higher beginning salaries at public dailies.[39]

Also notable is the difference between part-time newsroom employees (private newspaper averaged 4.92 and public 3.81). Both types of ownership showed great variation. By combining the part-time and full-time employees (assuming two part-time equal one full-time employee), private newspapers averaged 54.44 full-time equivalent newsroom employees (1.06 per thousand circulation) and public averaged 47.14 full-time equivalent newsroom employees (1.02 per thousand circulation).

The two types of newspapers also differed in their levels of profit. The privately held newspapers averaged a response of four, which was a profit between 15% and 20%. The publicly held newspapers averaged a 5.45, where five equaled 20-25% and six equaled 25-30%. The private newspapers showed greater variation, with a standard deviation of 2.07, while public newspapers had a standard deviation of 1.54.

Also notable in Table 1 is the variability of some of the variables. The coefficient of variation[40] (CV) for four privately owned variables and one publicly owned variable were greater than .5. The CV for full-time employees at privately owned newspapers equaled .67, compared to .46 for publicly held newspapers. The CV for full-time equivalent employees was .66 for privately held newspapers and .45 for publicly held newspapers. These two comparisons indicate that privately held newspapers in this sample showed more variation for number of employees in their newsroom than did publicly held newspapers. Both types of newspapers showed high variation with part-time employees. The CV for privately held newspapers was .94, and the CV for publicly held newspapers equaled .88.

Just as privately held newspapers showed greater variation in employees, they also showed greater variation with profit margins. The private newspapers had a CV of .52, compared to a CV for public newspapers of .29. The public newspapers averaged higher profits with less variability than did the privately held newspapers.

This high variation among newspapers is consistent with other research about daily newspapers.[41]

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 states that publicly held daily newspapers will have higher profit margins than privately owned daily newspapers. The first column of Table 2 contains the results of a regression equation that tests this hypothesis. The regression explains 21.9% of the variation in profit. Public ownership is treated as a dummy variable with a regression coefficient of 1.271. This indicates that publicly owned newspaper managers reported higher profits than did managers at privately held newspapers. Because each unit of profit represents up to 5%, this indicates public newspapers have about 6% higher profit margins than do the privately held newspapers. The hypothesis is supported for the newspapers in this study.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Hypothesis 2 states that as competition with dailies within a daily newspaper's county increases, profit margins will decrease. Data from the first column in Table 2 support this hypothesis, although the impact is not great. The regression coefficient equals -.0342, which indicates for each 1% increase in penetration by other dailies in the county, the profit scale declined by .0342. An increase of 29 percentage points in other dailies' penetration resulted in a decline of 1 point on the scale, which is equal to a decline of 5 percentage points in profit margin.

Hypothesis 3 states that as profit margins increase, the number of newsroom employees will decrease. Data in Table 2 address this hypothesis, with three measures of the dependent variable (full-time newsroom employees, part-time newsroom employees and full-time newsroom equivalents). The hypothesis had weak support for full-time employees with a regression coefficient of -.255, which indicates that for each increase in a unit of profit (5% ranges), the full-time employees decreased by a quarter person. However, the standard error was 1.07, which indicates a huge variation among newspapers.

The hypothesis was not supported for part-time employees because the regression coefficient equaled .378, which was in the opposite direction of the hypothesis. As profit margins increased, the number of part-time newsroom employees increased. It may be that this was a way of off-setting the decrease in full-time employees. Because the full-time newsroom equivalent is a combination of full-time and part-time, the hypothesis was not supported. The regression coefficient was in the right direction, but it was small at -.0667. However, the standard error equaled 1.085, which indicates large variation across newspapers.

Hypothesis 4 states that as profit margins increase, starting salaries for reporters will decrease. This hypothesis is addressed by the regression equation in column 2 of Table 2, and received only weak support. For each increase of one point in the profit scale, salary declined by $111 per year. However, the standard error for the variable is high at $188 .

Hypothesis 5 states that as competition within a daily newspaper's county increases, the number of newsroom employees will increase. Data in Table 2 shows that this hypothesis was not supported for part-time employees, but received support for full-time employees and full-time equivalent employees. In the latter case, the regression coefficient showed that each increase of 1% in penetration by other dailies resulted in an increase in .128 full-time employee. In other words, the newsroom received one more full-time employee for each 8% increase in penetration by other dailies in the county.

Hypothesis 6 states that publicly held daily newspapers will have fewer newsroom employees than privately held daily newspapers. Data in Table 2 support this hypothesis. Public ownership was associated with 1.354 fewer full-time employees and 1.46 fewer part-time employees. Public ownership was associated with 2.084 fewer full-time equivalent employees.

Hypothesis 7 states that publicly held daily newspapers will have lower starting salaries for reporters than privately owned daily newspapers. This was not supported. The data indicate that publicly held newspapers averaged about $1,497 more a year in starting salaries than did the privately owned dailies. The variance was only moderate with a standard deviation of $673.

The research question asked if the impact of profit margins and public ownership on starting salaries and number of employees becomes progressively greater as newspaper profits exceed average profit margins. Data in Table 3 address this question. The regression equations in Table 3 were similar to those in Table 2, except the cases used for Table 3 were limited to newspapers that had profits higher than four on the profit scale. This was the average for the privately owned newspapers and it included 43 newspapers.[42] By comparing the regression coefficients in Table 3 with those in Table 2, one can get an indication of whether the impact of profit and public ownership is progressively greater in higher profit newspapers.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

The impact of profit margin on salary is less at higher profit newspapers (regression coefficient of -64.56 versus -111.0), but the variance is greater (393.33 versus

188.8). However, the impact of profit on starting salaries is relatively small in both tables. The impact of profit margin on number of part-time employees is about the same for both tables, but profit has a much greater impact on full-time employees and full-time equivalent employees at higher profit newspapers. The regression coefficient for number of full-time employees at higher circulation newspapers equaled -1.671, compared to -.255 for all newspapers. Once again, the variation is progressively greater for higher profit papers. A similar pattern is found with number of full-time equivalent employees where the regression coefficient for all newspapers was -.0667 but -1.497 for higher profit papers.

A similar pattern was found with the impact of public ownership. It had a progressively greater impact with greater variation on starting salary, number of full-time employees and number of full-time equivalent employees for higher profit newspapers than with all newspapers. The exception was the impact on part-time employees, where public ownership had less of an impact for higher profit newspapers. Working at a high profit, public newspaper meant an increase of about $2,106 in starting salary per year, although this varied greatly from one newspaper to the next.

The impact of public ownership on number of full-time employees more than doubled for higher profit newspapers. The regression coefficient for all newspapers was -1.354, but for higher profit newspapers, it was -3.467. This indicates that being a publicly owned newspaper in the high profit group could reduce number of full-time employees in the newsroom by about 3.5. The -4.012 regression coefficient for number of full-time equivalent indicates that a high profit, a public newspaper was likely to have four fewer FTE newsroom employees. However, the high variation meant that this result did not describe all high profit, publicly owned newspapers.

These results need to be viewed with reservations. The high variance among the dependent variables suggests a great deal of variation among publicly and privately held newspapers, although the privately held dailies tended to vary more. The variation may result from the small size of the sample, or it may represent variance that exists in the newspaper industry.[43]

The open-ended comments tended to concentrate on the relationship between ownership and salaries, and as a whole were consistent with the statistical analysis. Most respondents who wrote comments said salaries were related to other variables such as cost of living in the area, market forces and quality of journalists.

Conclusions

The results of this study are consistent with media economic models and earlier studies in most respects. Publicly held daily newspapers produce higher profit margins than do privately held daily newspapers. Public ownership and higher profits were related negatively to larger newsroom staffs. Contrary to expectations, public ownership was positively related with starting salaries. Also, as hypothesized, the presence of competition was positively correlated with newsroom size and starting salary, which is consistent with the financial commitment model of news competition.[44]

The conclusions of this study are consistent with many of the conclusions of Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski.[45] However, there is one inconsistency concerning the role of competition. Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski state: "The terms of competition have little or nothing to do with news quality--the quality of the product produced by the firms--in most markets today."[46] Their conclusion is inconsistent with existing research and the conclusion of this research that competition affects newsroom employment, which is in turn related to quality. Perhaps the issue is what the term "most" means. Certainly, the majority of dailies do not face competition, but that's because 1,056 of 1,480 dailies in 2000 had less than 25,000 circulation and existed in small markets.[47] The dailies with more than 25,000 often exist in media rich markets and face competition from other dailies and non-dailies.[48] The data from this survey indicate that competition is alive and well among the 77 newspapers analyzed here.

This study also suggests that the impact of profitability and public ownership on newsroom size is not linear but grows progressively greater as with increases in profit above average. The relationship found here becomes much stronger for newspapers with higher than average profit margins. Newspapers in this study with profit margins higher than 25% lost about four newsroom staffers for each 5% increase in profits margin. Just being a publicly owned newspaper in this group reduced full-time equivalent staff by about 1 1/2.

These conclusions must be drawn with caution for several reasons. First, this sample was limited to non-union daily newspapers with circulation between 25,000 and 100,000. Second, only 27% of the original newspapers supplied profit data. Third, these newspapers showed great variance. As Lacy and Simon said in 1993:

> Just as independent owners vary greatly on the goals they pursue, group managers' goals often vary. A crucial aspect of understanding ownership's impact is whether the individuals who make the important decisions in a firm believe that high journalistic standards and performance are good for business in the long run. This belief is a function of individual background and corporate culture.[49]

Managers of publicly held groups that cut newsroom budgets to preserve profit margins should take no comfort in the large variance that makes generalizations difficult. The conclusions here may be weakened by that variance, but they are still consistent with previous research and theory that indicates public ownership and high profits reduce financial commitment to the newsroom.

From a public policy perspective, the decline of competition that has accompanied clustering[50] will remove the constraint that limits the ability of publicly held groups to cut employees in the newsroom. The two trends of increased public ownership and decreasing competition appear to have come together to reduce the quality of newspapers.

Of course, these conclusions need the support of replication. Such efforts should include newspapers in a wider range of circulation categories and use larger samples, which might reduce the variance within these variables and allow for definitive conclusions. At the same time, the nonlinear relationship of very high profit margins and employees in the newsroom needs further examination. The impact of very high profits on newsroom resources might explain the findings of the study that concluded the poor quality of Thomson newspapers that resulted from high profit margins drastically reduced circulation and penetration during the 1980s[51] and might well explain why Thomson newspapers could not make high enough profits during the 1990s to maintain their ownership of newspapers in the United States. The Thomson study and this research should be considered a warning about the long-run negative impact of very high profits on the quality and circulation of daily newspapers.

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[1] Greg Mitchell, "Poll finds profits rule," *Editor & Publisher*, April 9, 2001, p. 16.

[2] For a summary of such research before 1993, see Stephen Lacy and Todd F. Simon, *The Economics and Regulation of United States Newspapers* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1993). More recent examinations of ownership include David Demers, *The Menace of the Corporate Newspaper: Fact or Fiction*? (Ames, IA: Iowa University Press, 1996), and Martha Matthews, "How Public ownership Affects Publisher Autonomy," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73 (summer 1996): 342-353.

[3] William B. Blankenburg and Gary W. Ozanich, "The Effects of Public Ownership on the Financial Performance of Newspaper Corporations," *Journalism Quarterly* 70 (spring 1993): 68-75; Stephen Lacy, Mary Alice Shaver and Charles St. Cyr, "The Effects of Public Ownership and Newspaper Competition on the Financial Performance of Newspaper Corporations: A Replication and Extension." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73 (summer 1996): 332-341; and Gilbert Cranberg, Randall Bezanson, John Soloski, *Taking Stock: Journalism and the Publicly Traded Newspaper* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 2001).

[4] *Editor & Publisher International Year Boo, 2001* (New York: Editor & Publisher, 2001).

[5] Stephen Lacy and Todd F. Simon, "Intercounty Group Ownership of Daily Newspapers and the decline of Competition for Readers," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74 (winter 1997): 814-825.

[6] Stephen Lacy, David Coulson and Hiromi Cho, "Competition for Readers among U.S. Metropolitan Daily, Non-metropolitan Daily and Weekly Newspapers," *Journal of Media Economics* 15:1 (2002): 21-40.

[7] Hugh Martin, "A Study of How a Strategy Creating Clusters of Commonly-Owned Newspapers Affects Prices, Quality and Profits," unpublished doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 2001.

[8] Lacy, Shaver and St. Cyr, "The Effects of Public."

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[9] Raymond B. Nixon, "Trends in U.S. Newspaper Ownership: Concentration with Competition," *Gazette* 14:3 (1968): 181-193; Loren Ghiglione, ed. *The Buying and Selling of American Newspapers* (Indianapolis: R. J. Berg, 1984); and Raymond B. Nixon and Tae-youl Hahn, "Concentration of Press Ownership: A Comparison of 32 Countries," *Journalism Quarterly* 48 (spring 1971): 5-16.

[10] John C. Busterna, "How Managerial Ownership Affects profit Maximization in Newspaper Firms," Journalism Quarterly 66 (summer 1989): 302-307; Theodore L. Glasser, David S. Allen, and S. Elizabeth Blanks, "The Influence of Chain Ownership on News Play: A Case Study," Journalism Quarterly 66 (autumn 1989): 607-615; Stephen Lacy and Fredrick Fico, "Newspaper Quality and Ownership: Rating the Groups," *Newspaper Research Journal* 11:2 (spring 1990): 42-56, Stephen Lacy, "Effect of Ownership on Daily Newspaper Content," *Journal of Media Economics* 4:1 (spring 1991): 35-47; Dennis F. Hale, "What Subscribers Think of Group Ownership of Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 57 (summer 1980): 314-316; and William B. Blankenburg, "A Newspaper Chain's Pricing Behavior," *Journalism Quarterly* 60 (summer 1983): 275-280.

[11] David Demers, *The Menace of the Corporate Newspaper: Fact or Fiction*? (Ames, IA: Iowa University Press, 1996).

[12] David K. Demers, "Structural Pluralism, Corporate Newspaper Structure, and News Source Perceptions: Another Test of the Editorial Vigor Hypothesis," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 75 (autumn 1998): 572-592.

[13] Philip Meyer and Stanley T. Weardon, "The Effects of Public Ownership on Newspaper Companies: A Preliminary Inquiry," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 48 (1984): 564-577.

[14] Martha Matthews, "How Public ownership Affects Publisher Autonomy," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 73 (summer 1996): 342-353.

[15] Blankenburg and Ozanich, "The Effects of Public."

[16] Lacy, Shaver and St. Cyr, "The Effects of Public."

[17] Martin, "A Study of How."

[18] Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski, *Taking Stock.*

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[19] Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloksi, *Taking Stock*, 9.

[20] Lacy and Simon, *Economics and Regulation*, 136-141.

[21] Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski, *Taking Stock*, and Lacy and Simon, *The Economic and Regulation.*

[22] Stanley K. Bigman, "Rivals in Conformity: A Study of Two Competing Dailies," *Journalism Quarterly* 25 (spring 1948): 127-131; Wesley F. Willoughby, "Are Two Competing Dailies Better than One? *Journalism Quarterly* 32 (spring 1955): 109-204; Raymond B. Nixon and Robert L. Jones, "The Content of Competitive vs. Non-competitive Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 33 (summer 1956): 299-314; Galen Rarick and Barrie Hartman, "The Effects of Competition on One Daily Newspaper's Content," *Journalism Quarterly* 43 (autumn 1966): 459-463; David H. Weaver and L. E. Mullins, "Content and Format Characteristics of Competing Daily Newspapers," *Journalism Quarterly* 52 (summer 1975): 257-264; and Lee Becker, Randy Beam and John Russial, "Correlates of Daily Newspaper Performance in New England," *Journalism Quarterly* 55 (spring 1978): 100-108.

[23] Barry R. Litman and Janet Bridges, "An Economic Analysis of American Newspapers," *Newspaper Research Journal* 7:3 (spring 1986): 9-26, and Stephen Lacy, "The Effects of Intracity Competition on Daily Newspaper Content," *Journalism Quarterly* 64 (summer-autumn 1987): 281-290.

[24] Litman and Bridges, "An Economic Analysis."

[25] Stephen Lacy, "A Model of Demand for News: Understanding the Impact of Competition on Daily Newspaper Content," *Journalism Quarterly* 66 (spring 1989): 40-48, 128, and Stephen Lacy, "The Financial Commitment Model of News Media Competition," *Journal of Media Economics* 5:2 (summer 1992): 5-21.

[26] Lacy, The Financial Commitment."

[27] Martin, "A Study of How," 127.

[28] Hiromi Cho, "The Impact of Newspaper Competition and Ownership on Resource Allocation: A Study in Japan," Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Michigan State University, 2000.

[29] Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski; *Taking Stock*, 13.

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[30] Lacy, Shaver and St, Cyr, "The Effects of Public Ownership."

[31] A 2001 survey commissioned of 77 publishers and 66 editors by *Editor & Publisher* found that most would not report their profit margins. See Mitchell, *Editor & Publisher*, p. 16.

[32] The American Association of Public Opinion Research provides a variety of formulas for response rates (www.aapor.org). In this survey, there were no returned questionnaires because every newspaper had someone filling the managing editor's position or that function. The denominator was 281. One formula defines the numerator as the total completed questionnaires plus the partially completed questionnaires. This is the 37% (105/281) rate reported in the text. Of the 105 returned questionnaires, 27 were only partially complete because the respondents left the profit margin question blank. The response rate when partially completed questionnaires were dropped was 28%.

[33] Robert Hood, "Why low-wage newspapers are now paying a price," *Columbia Journalism Review*, May/June 2000, 73.

[34] See Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski, *Taking Stock*, 155-199. The publicly traded corporation listed were: A. H. Belo Corporation, Central Newspapers, Dow Jones & Company, E. W. Scripps Company, Gannett Company, Gray Communications Systems, Hollinger International, The Journal Register Company, Knight Ridder, Inc., Lee Enterprises, The McClatchy Company, Media general, Inc., The New York Times Company, The Pulitzer Publishing Company, Times Mirror Company, Tribune Company, and the Washington post Company. The sample used here did not include newspapers from all of these company.

[35] Stephen Lacy, 1988, Lacy, Simon and Fico, Lacy, Coulson and Cho,

[36] *Circulation 2001* (Des Plaines, IL: Standard Rate and Data Service, 2001). Data on circulation and penetration are from March 2000.

[37] Asking managing editors about profit margins poses at least three possible sources of measurement error: the fact that MEs may not know the newspaper's profit margin, some MEs might be incorrect about what the margin was for the year 2000, and the variation in profit margin measures used in businesses (e.g., net profit margin, after tax profit margin, etc.). It is impossible to know whether a particular ME does or does

not know the newspaper's profit margin. However, the attention paid to profits in the trade press during the past few years suggest that many would be curious enough to find out. Memory error could affect the conclusions of the research if it was systematic. In other words, if most of the errors were consistent in over-estimating or under-estimating the profit margins, the conclusions could likewise over-estimate or under-estimate the relationships. Non-systematic memory error can cancel itself out within a sample (C. A. Moser and G. Kalton, *Survey Methods in Social Investigation*, 2nd ed. (News York: Basic Books, Inc., 1972), 380.) There is no indication that the net error here would bias the conclusions to a great degree. Finally, to try to avoid confusion over profit calculations, the question about profit margins (called percentage of profitability) included a definition of profit: revenues minus expenses divided by revenues. Of course, the final test of data validity is whether the results are consistent with existing theory and research.

[38] Barbara G. Tabachnick and Linda S. Fidell, *Using Multivariate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).

[39] If one applies the starting salary to all employees, the increase in newsroom budget for public newspapers because of higher salaries would be $35,596 (45.23 x $787). The increase in the private newspaper budgets due to having 6.52 employees would be $162,368 (6.52 x $24,903). Although the application of starting salaries is not strictly appropriate, if the logic would still hold as long as roughly the same or even slightly high differentiation between public and private newspaper salaries at all salary ranges.

[40] The coefficient of variation is the standard deviation divided by the mean. It allows a comparison of variability across variables. Anything above a .5 shows noteworthy variation.

[41] Mary Alice Shaver and Stephen Lacy, "The Impact of Intermedia and Newspaper Competition on Advertising Linage in Daily Newspapers," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 76 (winter 1999): 729-744; and Stephen Lacy, David Coulson and Hiromi Cho, "The Impact of Competition on Weekly Newspaper Advertising Rates," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 78 (autumn 2001): 450-465.

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[42] This analysis should be treated cautiously because the case-to-variable ratio dropped to 8.6, which is acceptable but not as robust as one would like to draw strong conclusions from the data.

[43] Other studies have found high variation among newspapers even when a population is used. For examples see, Lacy, Coulson and Cho, "Competition for Readers," and Mary Alice Shaver and Stephen Lacy, "The Impact of Intermedia and Newspaper Competition on Advertising Linage in Daily Newspapers," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 76 (winter 1999): 729-744. Sampling theory explains that as sample sizes increase, dispersion in a samples should decrease. However, sampling theory is based on very large samples and populations. Fewer than 1,500 daily newspapers exist in the United States, which may indicate that this population contains high variance just as samples of them do.

[44] Litman and Bridges, "An Economic Analysis," and Lacy, "The Financial Commitment Model."

[45] Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski, *Taking Stock*, 6-13.

[46] Cranberg, Bezanson and Soloski, *Taking Stock*,13

[47] *Editor & Publisher International Year Book* (New York: Editor & Publisher, 2001), viii.

[48] For a discussion of these types of competition see Janet A. Bridges, Barry R. Litman and Lamar W. Bridges, "Rosse's Model Revisited: Moving to Concentric Circles to Explain Newspaper Competition," *Journal of Media Economics* 15:1 (2002): 3-19.

[49] Lacy and Simon, *Economics and Regulation*, 140.

[50] Lacy and Simon, "Intercounty Group Ownership," and Martin, "A Study of How."

[51] Stephen Lacy and Hugh J. Martin, "Profits Up, Circulation Down for Thomson papers in 80s," *Newspaper Research Journal* 19:3 (summer 1998): 63-76.

Table 1

Differences between Publicly and Privately Owned Newspapers

	Privately Owned		Publicly Owned		All Newspapers	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Circulation	51,290	23,774	46,065	19,389	48,852	21,892
	(n=56)		(n=49)		(n=105)	
Starting Pay	24,903	3,526	25,690	3,078	25,277	3,328
	(n=54)		(n=49)		(n=103)	
Full-time Newsroom Employees	51.75	34.52	45.23	20.64	48.65	28.82
	(n=53)		(n=48)		(n=101)	
Part-time Newsroom Employees	4.92	4.64	3.81	3.34	4.40	4.09
	(n=53)		(n=48)		(n=101)	
Full-time Equivalent Newsroom Employees	54.44	35.67	47.14	21.14	50.97	29.75
	(n=53)		(n=48)		(n=101)	
Profit Level**	4.00	2.07	5.45	1.54	4.74	1.94
	(n=38)		(n=40)		(n=78)	

*FTE equals the full-time newsroom employees plus one-half the part-time newsroom employees. This is based on the assumption of each part-time employee working half the number of hours a week as a full-time newsroom employee.

**Each digit increase in the profit-level measure equals an increase in profits of 5% (1 = 0%--5% profit margin, 2 = 6%--10% profit margin, etc.)

Table 2

Regression Coefficients and Standard Error of Coefficients Using All Cases

	Dependent Variables				
Independent Variables	Profit Margin	Starting Salary	Full-time Newsroom Employees	Part-time Newsroom Employees	Full-time Newsroom Equivalent
Circulation	.00001 (.000)	.0780 (.014)	.00098 (.000)	.00003 (.000)	.0010 (.000)
Profit Margin	N/A	-111.0 (188.8)	- .255 (1.07)	.378 (.252)	-.0667 (1.085)
Public Ownership	1.271 (.390)	1,497 (673)	-1.354 (3.94)	-1.46 (.925)	-2.084 (3.99)
Penetration of Other Dailies in County	-.0342 (.011)	6.25 (19.12)	.128 (.108)	.00310 (.025)	.144 (.110)
Starting Salary	N/A	N/A	.0010 (.001)	.00023 (.000)	.0011 (.001)
Adjusted R-Square	.219	.267	.691	.103	.697

N = 77

Table 3

Regression Coefficients and Standard Error of Coefficients Using High Profit Newspapers

Independent Variables	Starting Salary	Full-time Newsroom Employees	Part-time Newsroom Employees	Full-time Newsroom Equivalent
	Dependent Variables			
Circulation	.0874 (.019)	.0010 (.000)	.00002 (.000)	.0010 (.000)
Profit Margin	-64.56 (393.33)	-1.671 (1.97)	.350 (.470)	-1.497 (1.989)
Public Ownership	2,106 (915)	-3.467 (4.89)	-1.09 (1.17)	-4.012 (4.94)
Penetration of Other Dailies in County	33.95 (28.85)	.329 (.147)	.0695 (.035)	.364 (.149)
Starting Salary	N/A	.0002 (.001)	.00024 (.000)	.0003 (.001)
Adjusted R-Square	.333	.775	.133	.780

N = 43

Framing a Mysterious Evil: U.S. Newspapers' Coverage of North Korean Leader Kim Jong Il, 1994-2000

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by

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Framing a Mysterious Evil: U.S. Newspapers' Coverage of North Korean Leader Kim Jong Il, 1994-2000

Abstract

This paper analyzed two major U.S. newspapers' coverage of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il from 1994 through 2000. Based on a content analysis of news reports, the study found that the newspapers conveyed negative images of Kim. However, there were significant changes in portraying Kim between 1994 and 2000. These results suggested that government sources have strong impacts on news media framing when the press has limited access channel to the issue.

Framing a Mystery Evil: U.S. Newspapers' Coverage of North Korean Leader Kim Jong Il, 1994-2000

Introduction

After her visit to North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, or DPRK) and talk with its leader Kim Jong Il in October 2000, the United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that she found him a "very good listener, a good interlocutor," and added, "He strikes me as very decisive and practical."[1] About three months later, Colin Powell, George W. Bush's designated secretary of state, described Kim in a more direct manner: "a dictator."[2] This rhetorical difference in describing Kim was understood as an implication that the new U.S. administration's attitude toward North Korea would be different from its predecessor's one; it also suggested how difficult it was to grasp the mysterious leader's real mentality.

With its huge military forces and presumed attempt to develop nuclear facilities, this closed country's movements have been considered to have serious influence not only on Northeast Asia, but also on global society.[3] Therefore, when Kim Il Sung, who had been the absolute leader of North Korea for about 50 years, died suddenly in 1994, many countries with interests in the Asia-Pacific area tried to predict who would succeed Kim to come to power in this dangerous country. It was not difficult to assume that Kim Il Sung's son Kim Jong Il was first on the list of candidates because the elder Kim's preparation for dynastic succession of his power had been well known to the outside world. However, many foreign policy officials and news media of Western countries were perplexed when they found how little was known about the new leader-to-be of the country.[4]

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[1] Jane Perlez, "Albright Reports Progress in Talks with North Korea," *The New York Times*, 25 October 2000, A8.

[2] "Powell wins approval of Senate committee," *MSNBC*, 18 January 2001 [Online]; available at <http://www.msnbc.com/news/517503.asp?cp1=1>, accessed 19 January 2001.

[3] When a war with North Korea seemed to be inevitable in 1994, a U.S. general in Korea estimated that as many as one million people would be killed in the war, including 80,000 to 100,000 Americans, that the costs to the United States would exceed 100 billion dollars. The destruction of property and interruption of business activity would cost more than one trillion dollars to the countries involved and their neighbors. Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: a Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 324.

Along with several countries in the Middle East, North Korea had been considered an important factor in the United States' national interests during the 1990s. Above all, the United States had been to war with North Korea. If Gans' argument was right when he said the ethnocentric interest for their own nation is one of the most important news values for news media to decide what should be reported,[5] U.S. news media might have been second only to South Korea (and perhaps Japan) in observing and reporting this small country in Northeast Asia.

Kim had never been a spotlighted figure in U.S. news media until his father died. The only thing to be known by 1994 was that he seemed to be more reclusive and unpredictable than his father was. However, he made a strong impression on Western society when in 2000 he invited and had talks with South Korean President Kim Dae Jung and the U.S. secretary of state, which North Koreans have called "the sworn enemy" since the Korean War.

By analyzing news stories about Kim Jong Il, this paper examines how two major U.S. newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, constructed the image of Kim Jong Il in their coverage of North Korea from 1994 through 2000. Based on framing and agenda building theory, a content analysis approach was performed to determine how these newspapers portrayed Kim, and whether there was any change in describing him between 1994 – when the conflict over North Korea's "nuclear program" was high – and 2000 – when the détente seemed to be on its way. The close analysis of U.S. newspapers' coverage of North Korea and its leader can provide an instance for understanding how U.S. news media frame foreign countries that are regarded as a negative factor for U.S. national interests.

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[4] Ibid., 346.

[5] Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 42.

The vagueness of Kim and the fluctuation of the relationship between the United States and North Korea have been a challenge to the U.S. news media. There was not much reliable information except for fragmentary episodes provided by sources without enough credibility. This specific situation provides a good example to examine how the news media cover a foreign issue about which not much is known. Additionally, this study adopted a time-oriented comparative approach in order to reveal the news media's change of attitude toward an object before and after significant events.

Literature Review

The news stories we see in mass media are not the real world itself. News is selected, constructed, and evaluated by journalists and their editors. Lippmann said, "the news is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself."[6] Many scholars devoted their efforts to explain this process. As one example among many, Lang and Lang applied the concept of "agenda building" to their study of the news coverage of the Watergate crisis. They said, "agenda building is a collective process in which media, government, and citizenry reciprocally influence one another in at least some respect."[7] They contended that news media affect agenda-building process in six steps: First, news media highlight some events or activities. Making something the center of interest affects how much people will think and talk about it. Second, news media use different amounts and kinds of coverage for different issues in order to gain attention. Third, these events and activities have to be framed, to be given a field of meanings within which they can be understood. Fourth, the language the media use to track events also affects the meaning imputed to them. Fifth, the media link the activities or events that have become the focus of attention to secondary symbols that are easily recognized. Sixth, there are the prestige and standing of the spokesmen who accelerate the agenda building process.[8]

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[6] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), 341.

Similarly, some scholars in agenda-setting research tradition have been focusing on how the "media agenda" is decided. As McCombs said, this approach is asking, "Who sets the news agenda?" instead of asking, "Who sets the public agenda?"[9]

Research interests in how an event or an issue becomes a news story introduced the frame model from cognitive psychology and sociology. Some early users of the concept of frames in news reporting explained the idea with analogies and metaphors. For example, Bateson said that a psychological frame is a class or set of messages where certain images are included and certain images are excluded, as they are in a picture frame.[10] Gitlin said media are mobile spotlights that choose some events to show to audiences and reject others. He defined media frames as "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual."[11] Gitlin argued that media frames, largely unspoken and unacknowledged, organize the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for those who rely on their report.

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[7] Galdys E. Lang and Kurt Lang, *The Battle for Public Opinion: The President, the Press, and the Polls During Watergate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 58-59.
[8] Ibid., 59-60.
[9] Maxwell E. McCombs, "Explorers and Surveyors: Expanding Strategies for Agenda-Setting Research," *Journalism Quarterly* 69 (1992): 816.

Tankard et al. defined a frame as "a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration."[12] Similarly, Gamson defined the news frame as "a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue."[13]

Entman explained that frames call attention to some aspects of reality while obscuring other elements, which might lead audiences to have different reactions:

> Framing essentially involves *selection* and *salience*. To frame is *to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described… Frames, then, *define problems* — determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; *diagnose causes* — identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral judgment* — evaluate causal agents and their effects; and *suggest remedies* — offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects."[14]

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[10] Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1972), 186.

[11] Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 7.

[12] James W. Tankard, Laura Hendricson, Jackie Silberman, Kris Bliss, and Salma Ghanem, "Media Frame: Approaches to Conceptualization and Measurement," presented paper, the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Convention, Boston, MA, 1991, 5.

[13] William A. Gamson, "News as Framing: Comments on Graber," *American Behavioral Scientist* 33 no.2 (1989): 157.

[14] Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43 no.4 (Autumn 1993): 52.

While researchers used various terms for defining news media's frame or framing, there are some common points in these variations. First, framing has something to do with the process in which news media determine *what* should be reported. Second, it is also related to the process in which the news media determine *how* the news item should be reported. Therefore, frame in mass media's news coverage functions as a device of selection and description. These functions can take place in everywhere while an issue becomes a news story, that is, in journalists' mind, in his/her interaction with others, in a desk meeting, or in gate keeping processes.

A number of empirical studies have examined the framing process and its result in news media. Entman, for example, analyzed the U.S. newsmagazines' coverage of two similar tragedies: a Korean Airlines (KAL) plane shot down by a USSR fighter in 1983, and an Iran Air Flight plane that was shot down by a U.S. Navy ship in 1988. He found that the coverage of the incidents was quite different in spite of all the similarities of the two incidents. He argued that the U.S. news media framed the KAL case as an "attack" while the Iran Flight case was framed as a "tragedy."[15] The study implied that the U.S media had adopted a particular frame in reporting foreign events in the Cold War era.

Similarly, Wall studied U.S. newsmagazines' coverage of ethnic conflict occurring in Bosnia and Rwanda in the early 1990s. She found that the two conflicts in Europe and Africa were portrayed quite differently because of their geographical circumstances.[16] Wall contended that even after the Cold War, the U.S. media used frames based on biases against non-Western people.

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[15] Robert M. Entman, "Framing U.S. Coverage of International News: Contrasts in Narratives of the KAL and Iran Incidents," *Journal of Communication* 41 no.4 (Autumn 1991): 18-20.

Kanjurathinkal and Hickey analyzed the media's framing of the Persian Gulf War and concluded that through careful framing the media transformed political and military events into mythical dramas to evoke deeply held beliefs in the masses and achieve political aims.[17] Iyengar and Simon were interested in the effects of the media's frames on the audience. They found that during the Persian Gulf crisis, survey respondents reporting higher rates of exposure to television news expressed greater support for a military as opposed to a diplomatic response. They argued that this effect resulted from the U.S. network news media's framing the war.[18]

The frames of news media are especially significant and the effects of them are noticeable when a news medium covers foreign affairs, because general audiences usually depend heavily on news media for international issues and events, unless they actively try to seek other alternative information channels. Kuusisto found that in foreign news about distant countries, the audience does not have a way to check whether these stories are true, and has to rely on the labels and narratives from the media.[19] Chang analyzed U.S. foreign policy and news media's coverage of China from 1950 to the mid-1980s and found that most U.S. residents' knowledge and perceptions of international events depended on how those events and issues are symbolized in the media. Removed from direct experience, the U.S. public relied on symbols created by news media as a means of public understanding.[20]

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[16] Melissa Wall, " A 'Pernicious News Strain of the Old Nazi Virus' and an 'Orgy of Tribal Slaughter'," *Gazette* 59 (1997): 424-425.

[17] Mathew Kanjirathinkal and Joseph V. Hickey, "Media Framing and Myth: The Media's Portrayal of the Gulf War," *Critical Sociology* 19 no.1 (1992): 103.

[18] Shanto Iyengar and Adam Simon, "News Coverage of the Gulf Crisis and Public Opinion," *Communication Research* 20 no.3 (1993): 381.

[19] Riikka Kuusisto, "Framing the Wars in the Gulf and in Bosnia: The Theoretical Definition of the Western Power Leaders in Action," *Journal of Peach Research* 35 (1998): 615.

There are few studies concentrating on the news coverage of a foreign political leader alone; many studies dealt with news stories about a certain issue such as the Gulf War. As a rare example, Brown analyzed *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* news articles about Steven Biko, a South African black leader, before and after his death in prison in 1977. Brown found that there was a discrepancy in describing him during the two time periods. Upon Biko's death, journalists in the two newspapers emphasized his great stature, significance, and his "moderate and responsible" view. However, evidence showed that when he was alive, the coverage did not provide readers with adequate understanding of Biko, nor did it explain later assertions regarding his significance and "moderate and responsible" view.[21] After his analysis of newspaper articles, Brown interviewed the relevant reporters in the two newspaper companies. These interviews revealed that reporters have difficulties in reporting foreign events adequately, particularly when they are permitted very limited access to a country.[22]

Some studies on the news coverage of international conflicts found that the images of an enemy country's political leaders were portrayed as cruel, despot, and Hitleresque. For example, Iyengar and Simon found that network news coverage during the Gulf War portrayed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein as a modern Hitler who was bent on annexing Kuwait and controlling the world's supply of petroleum.[23]

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[20] Tsan-Kuo Chang, *The Press and China Policy: The Illusion of Sino-American Relations, 1950-1984* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1993), 101-102.
[21] Trevor Brown, "Did Anybody Know His Name?: U.S. Press Coverage of Biko," *Journalism Quarterly* 57 (1980): 38.
[22] Ibid., 37.

Research Questions

Based on the literature review and the overview of the relationship between the United States and North Korea, this paper attempts to find answers to the following research questions:

1. How do these two U.S. newspapers frame North Korean leader Kim Jong Il in foreign news coverage? This question is set to examine the overall attitude of the U.S. newspapers toward Kim.
2. What are the sources used in the coverage? With this question, this study is especially interested in an unusual situation in which the news media neither have much information nor have enough alternative channels to access the issue.
3. Is there any change in the newspapers' portrayals of Kim between the year 1994 and 2000? This question is to examine whether the news media's coverage of Kim was congruent with the change of the atmosphere between the United States and North Korea. Previous studies showed the U.S. foreign policy or the policy makers played an important role in news media's coverage of foreign issue. Therefore, in this case, it can be reasonably assumed that the coverage of Kim had something to do with the change of the U.S. government's attitude toward North Korea or its leader.

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[23] Iyengar and Simon, 381-382.

Methods

This study adopted a content analysis approach to analyze the two major U.S. newspapers' coverage of Kim Jong Il: *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. These two newspapers were chosen because of their leading position and their daily national circulation of about one million each.[24] They are generally considered to provide the most comprehensive coverage of foreign affairs by U.S. daily newspapers. As for the importance of these newspapers, Chang argued that "while not many people actually read the two papers, they are heavily consumed daily by top policy makers, elites, and diplomats in and out of Washington, as well as movers and shakers in the journalistic community. The impact of the press, if any, on governmental activities will have to be judged mainly from its constant usage by those who make final decisions."[25]

The time period to be studied in this study is from July 8, 1994, when Kim Jong Il's father and the absolute ruler Kim Il Sung died, through December 31, 2000, when President Clinton sought to visit North Korea and hoped to meet Kim. The assumption of selecting this period was that before his father's death on July 8, 1994, news stories about Kim Jong Il in U.S. newspapers were very rare. The end point of December 2000 was set because this is the time when the reconciliation between the United States and North Korea was at a peak.

This study examined all the articles in the predetermined time period described above, rather than selecting samples and focusing on them. Using Lexis-Nexis, an online database, and additional "hand search," 443 news articles were identified in the two newspapers. These articles were chosen only because they contained the name "Kim Jong Il" in them. Therefore, many articles of them did not give readers any information about Kim Jong Il; they simply used his name to show who was in power in North Korea. For that reason, these 443 articles were checked for relevancy to the topic in this study. Articles that had Kim's name only without any further information were excluded from the data through this screening. Finally, an overall total of 241 articles were selected for this content analysis.

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[24] According to the record of Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) on September 30, 2000, New York Times has circulation of 1,097,180 for weekday and 1,682,208 for Sunday, and Washington Post has circulation of 762,009 for weekday and 1,065,011 for Sunday (net paid). See Standard Rate and Data Service, *Newspaper Advertising Source* 83 no.3 (March 2001): 128, 449.

[25] Chang, 237.

Some researchers chose paragraphs as their units of analysis in studying the content of newspaper articles.[26] However, in this study every entire article was analyzed as the unit of analysis because one purpose of this study is to examine the overall attitude of an article that consisted of title, subtitle, body, and visual contents.

To answer the research questions, the newspaper articles were coded according to predetermined variables in a code book. Every article was categorized on the basis of research questions: (1) What was the main topic of the story? (Topic); (2) What was the source used in the story to describe Kim? (Source); (3) Which title or appellation was used for Kim? (Title); (4) Was the point of view of the story positive or negative to Kim? (Attitude); and (5) What kinds of modifiers were used in describing Kim's personality? (Modifier). The definitions of all these variables are in the code book (see Appendix A).

Working independently, two coders took part in this coding process. A pilot test of 20 random samples conducted and the result was satisfactory, with an overall agreement of 91 percent for Holsti's percentage of agreement and 0.875 for Cohen's kappa.

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[26] For example, Chang, 1993, and Sung Tae Kim, "Making a Differences: U.S. Press Coverage of the Kwangju and Tiananmen Pro-Democracy Movement," Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly 77 no.1 (Spring 2000): 22-36.

Findings and Discussion

Kim Jong Il in 1994-2000

Of 241 articles studied in this analysis, 131 stories were from *The Washington Post* (54.4 percent) and 110 stories were from *The New York Times* (45.6 percent). About one fourth of the articles appeared in 1994 (from July), while one third appeared in 2000 (see Table 1). This result shows that portraying Kim was especially important in those two years. The year 1994 was the time when Kim rose as a new leader after his father's sudden death. In 2000, he opened his reclusive country and established diplomatic relations with some Western countries actively, which nobody had predicted. Moreover, Kim Dae Jung, the South Korean President, and U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited Pyongyang in June and October 2000, respectively.

Table 1. Articles that contain description about Kim Jong Il, 1994-2000

	1994*	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Washington Post	32	5	10	26	14	11	33	131
New York Times	30	3	5	11	8	5	48	110
Total	62	8	15	37	22	16	81	241

* Since July.

More than half of the articles analyzed were hard news (55.6 percent), and about one third were feature stories (32.0 percent). Although there were a lot of editorials and columns written about North Korea, most of them were excluded from this study because they dealt with North Korea itself instead of focusing on Kim as a political leader. Only 12 editorials, five op-ed stories, and 13 columns were analyzed.

Sources of Articles

The data collected here show that the most frequently used source in the two newspapers' coverage of Kim was U.S. officials (see Table 2). The newspapers relied heavily on various officials from President Clinton to a military analyst in the Pentagon to describe Kim. This was not an unexpected result, because previous studies showed similar results. For example, Chang found that there existed a hierarchy of news sources in the U.S. newspapers' coverage of U.S. foreign policy toward China: Almost half of the sources were from the "Executive" category, which meant government officials.[27]

In this study, however, the portion of U.S. officials as sources of information is not as high as Chang's study, partly because of the high portion of "Observation" (28.6 percent) category. When a writer or reporter did not mention the source used in the story, the article was classified as "Observation." There are several types in this kind of reporting. First, the reporter observed the issue about Kim personally and reported it. Second, the reporter used information about Kim that was already known. In this case, the information followed some phrases that showed it was not reporters' opinion ("he is said to…", "reportedly…" or "it said…"). Third, some reports used existing information without quotation marks.

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[27] Chang, 149-150. In Chang's study of U.S. newspapers' coverage of China from 1950 through 1984, the portion of domestic executive (U.S. government) officials as a news source was 45.9 percent.

Whether the reporter used quotation marks or not, it seemed to be clear that the reporter was influenced by information provided by government officials when he described Kim on the basis of existing information. This is because the journalist could hardly find an alternative channel in order to get information on Kim and North Korea.

Some news stories used more than one source in describing Kim. All of these cases were sent to the "Multiple" category. U.S. officials were also common sources in these multiple sources type stories.

Most sources coded in the category of "South Korea" were South Korean government officials. One can reasonably assume that the U.S. officials' perception of Kim was not significantly different from that of South Korean officials, at least in terms of Kim's personality and private life. It is because most information about Kim's personal life was produced in South Korea — mainly from the intelligence services — and immediately shared with other countries through formal and informal channels.

One interesting category here is "Defector" from North Korea. These defectors were North Korean people who fled from their country to seek asylum in South Korea for various reasons, but mostly economic reasons. Defectors from North Korea were precious sources of information about Kim Jong Il because little was known about him outside of North Korea. However, it is natural for them to have negative opinion about their country and its leader. Also it is natural for news stories based on the testimony of defectors to portray Kim and his country in a negative way.

Table 2. Sources of information about Kim, 1994-2000

	1994*	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total	%
U.S. officials	17	-	4	8	2	6	17	54	22.4
U.S. other	-	-	-	1	-	-	2	3	1.2
North Korea	9	3	1	4	7	2	-	26	10.8
South Korea	11	2	4	1	2	1	15	36	14.9
Defectors	1	-	1	7	1	1	1	12	5.0
Other Country	2	-	-	1	2	-	7	12	5.0
Multiple	9	-	-	4	1	-	6	20	8.3
Unspecified	4	-	-	2	2	-	1	9	3.7
Observation	9	3	5	9	5	6	32	69	28.6
Total	62	8	15	37	22	16	81	241	100.0

* Since July.

Portraying Kim Jong Il

The way in which the news articles portray Kim was examined through three evaluation variables: Title, Attitude, and Modifier. First, Title variable was adopted to examine how the newspapers defined Kim officially. While Kim had his official titles such as Chairman (of National Defense Committee) or General Secretary (of Workers' Party of Korea, since October 1997), he was seldom called by the titles. Rather, it was common to call him "the leader." Thinking that foreign political leaders are usually called by their official position, this tendency was interpreted as a journalists' habit to underestimate Kim's political role (see Table 3).

Table 3. Tone of title of Kim in the Articles, 1994-2000

	1994*	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total	%
Positive	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	8	3.3
Neutral	14	1	8	18	12	11	51	115	47.7
Negative	48	7	7	19	10	3	24	118	49.0
Total	62	8	15	37	22	16	81	241	100.0

* Since July.

Second, every article was analyzed as a whole unit of analysis and coded by its overall attitude to Kim (see Table 4). In deciding the attitude of an article toward Kim, not only the text but also title, subtitle, and visual content such as photograph and picture and their captions were considered. A total of 28 articles (11.6 percent) were coded as positive, 109 articles as neutral (45.2 percent), and 104 articles as negative (43.2 percent).

Table 4. Attitude of the articles to Kim, 1994-2000

	1994*	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total	%
Positive	2	-	-	1	2	1	22	28	11.6
Neutral	32	7	7	16	10	5	32	109	45.2
Negative	28	1	8	20	10	10	27	104	43.2
Total	62	8	15	37	22	16	81	241	100.0

* Since July.

Third, one of the important factors in producing an image of political leaders is the short and simple modifier that usually precedes a leader's name or title. Its effect is powerful because it is simple and suggestive, and its impression lasts long because it is very easy to remember. As described in the code book, the modifiers in the articles studied here were classified into 11 categories.

The results are shown in Table 5. These data show that more than one fourth of the articles described Kim as a "reclusive" leader. The words "enigmatic" and "mysterious" were used in the same context. It is not surprising that the most frequently used modifier in coverage of Kim was "reclusive," because he did not expose himself much to outside world. As a result, as one newspaper said, "the only thing that can be said with certainty about Kim Jong Il is that very little is known about him."[28]

The first five categories in the Table 5 are related to negative portrayals, while the next five give positive impressions. Therefore, 141 stories (58.5 percent) had negative modifiers such as totalitarian, Stalinist, enigmatic, unstable, psychopath, kooky, megalomania, and greedy. In contrast, 50 stories (20.7 percent) had positive modifiers such as well-informed, moderate, smart, and humorous.

This result shows that there were almost no positive modifiers before 2000, except one case of "Affable" and 15 cases of "Capable." Most positive modifiers appeared in various forms in 2000, especially after the high-ranking leaders' meetings. "Practical" and "Active" modifiers were used 11 times and nine times respectively,

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[28] Andrew Pollack, "A 'Dear Leader,' Not Very Well Known, but Trained for Years to Take Control," *The New York Times*, 10 July 1994, Sec.1 p.12.

Table 5. Positive and negative modifiers in the Articles, 1994-2000

	1994*	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total	%
Capable	5	5	2	3	-	-	3	18	7.5
Practical	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	11	4.6
Active	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	9	3.7
Affable	1	-	-	-	-	-	7	8	3.3
Confident	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	1.7
Positive								50	20.7
Reclusive	16	1	3	8	6	8	22	64	26.6
Abnormal	6	-	3	4	3	1	12	29	12.0
Despotic	2	-	1	9	4	-	6	22	9.1
Incapable	8	1	-	3	-	-	1	13	5.4
Immoral	1	-	3	1	-	4	4	13	5.4
Negative								141	58.5
Positive and Negative/ Unspecified	23	1	3	9	9	3	2	50	20.7
Total	62	8	15	37	22	16	81	241	100.0

* Since July.

which were not shown before 2000. Positive descriptions of his personality, such as "Affable" and "Confident," also increased. This change reflected the fact that reporters and sources of news stories found after a series of high-ranking meetings that Kim had some "unexpected" characteristics.

However, it should not be ignored that the negative modifiers were still frequently used. For example, the numbers of all the negative modifiers except "Incapable" increased in 2000 in comparison with previous years, even though the portion of them decreased.

A Contrast between 1994 and 2000 in "evaluation variables"

As described above, Kim showed an active attitude toward the outside world in 2000. The U.S. officials' perception of "new Kim" was symbolized by Albright's comment that Kim was a leader whom one could meet and discuss important issues with. Then, did Kim's image in U.S. newspapers changed accordingly? For this comparison study, newspaper articles no later than June 1 were excluded for the year 2000 because this study examines the change of tone after important high-rank meetings between North Korea and South Korea and the United States, which had taken place since June.

This analysis shows that there was a significant change in labeling Kim between 1994 and 2000 (see Table 6). There was not any positive title for Kim in 1994. Most titles used in news articles reminded readers of the fact that Kim was the heir of a Stalinist dictator, that he had been trained as a communist for a long time, and that he was an immoral "Caligula." Sometimes he was labeled "Dear Leader," as North Koreans called him, which implied Kim's personality cult.

Table 6. Tone of title in 1994 and 2000 (n=135)

Title	1994	2000	Total
Positive	-	6	6
Neutral	14	45	59
Negative	48	22	70
Total	62	73	135

Chi-Square = 31.257, p<.001.

However, in 2000, the number of negative labels obviously decreased. More value-free titles such as "leader of North Korea" were used. Even some stories reporting North-South summit called Kim "the President," although he had not inherited the title from his father yet. It was not a mistake, but seemed to be adopted in order to balance the weight of official positions between the South and North leaders.

A change between 1994 and 2000 was evident in the overall attitudes of articles toward Kim (see Table 7). Only two stories were favorable to Kim in 1994. However, in 2000, 21 stories (28.8 percent) described him in a positive tone.

Table 7. Attitude of the article to Kim in 1994 and 2000 (n=135)

Attitude	1994	2000	Total
Positive	2	21	23
Neutral	32	29	61
Negative	28	23	51
Total	62	73	135

Chi-Square = 15.540, p<.001.

The ten modifiers were re-categorized into dichotomy variables (positive and negative) in order to apply a statistical analysis. The first five categories (Reclusive, Despotic, Incapable, Abnormal, and Immoral) were classified into negative items, and the next five categories (Affable, Capable, Practical, Confident, and Active) were regarded as positive items. "Unspecified" was taken out as a missing value (see Table 8).

The results show that there was a very significant change between 1994 and 2000 in using modifiers in the news stories. Although negative modifiers were still a prominent in 2000, the portion of positive modifiers increased from six (15.4 percent) to 31 (43.1 percent). These data indicate that the symbolic description of Kim changed significantly, probably along with the change of attitude in news sources.

In 2000, with the visits of top-ranking officials of the United States and South Korea, the news media could observe Kim at a very short distance. Therefore, the dramatic increase of positive modifiers in 2000 was a reaction of existing strong negative images of Kim. When the existing image is so negative, anything that looks normal is often accepted as positive aspects.

Table 8. Modifiers in 1994 and 2000 (n=111)

Modifier	1994	(%)	2000	(%)	Total
Positive	6	(15.4)	31	(43.1)	37
Negative	33	(84.6)	41	(56.9)	74

Chi-Square = 8.716, p<.01.

The analysis of the two U.S. newspapers' coverage of Kim in these two periods shows that there were significant changes between the periods in all "evaluation variables," even though the sources of the articles were not changed. Kim was described as only a mysterious leader of a "rogue state" in 1994. However, at the end of the year 2000, he got a new image of reasonable political reader in addition to old negative images. Many doubts about Kim still remained in the newspapers' coverage of him, especially in editorials and columns. However, the data indicated that at least Kim was very successful in appealing to the outside world.

Conclusion

A quantitative content analysis of two U.S. newspapers' articles about North Korean leader Kim Jong Il from 1994 through 2000 shows that the news coverage in this time period conveyed a negative image of Kim more than a positive image. The frame devices used in these portrayals were title, modifier, and overall description of image. Many articles relied on U.S. officials as an important information source. Some stories did not specify news sources in them. But it could be reasonably assumed that in most cases, reporters echoed officials' voices.

According to Entman's definition of frame, these newspapers chose negative aspects of Kim without enough information, and made them more salient by emphasizing them repeatedly. In this process, they defined the problem (The uncertainty of Kim and North Korea is an important threatening factor to the United States' interests in East Asia), diagnosed cause (The uncertainty is due to Kim's irrational, unpredictable personality and behavior), made moral judgments (He is a dangerous dictator who is interested only in expanding armaments and movies and Swedish women), and suggested remedies (The threat should be eliminated immediately).[29]

However, along with the U.S. government's active engagement policy toward North Korea and the "reconciliation" between the two Koreas, some significant changes were found in portraying Kim between 1994 and 2000. The portion of negative portrayals gradually decreased. This result implied that there had been important interactions between newspapers and U.S. foreign policies.

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[29] See note 14 above.

As many studies suggested, journalists and government officials always have a close relationship with each other. For example, Cohen found that foreign policy officials consider major newspapers as a source of public opinion.[30] On the contrary, for the news media, officials are inevitable information providers. Gans argued that the most frequent and regular source to the press is public officials.[31] These interactions are especially critical when news media do not have many alternative sources about the news event or issue. Does that mean that news media are passive transmitters of government opinion when they have very rare access to the issue except for the government officials? Further studies can reveal more about official-media interaction in this "access-limited" situation.

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[30] Bernard C. Cohen, *The Public's Impact on Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 107.

[31] Gans, 144.

Appendix A

Code Book

1. Newspaper: This content analysis examines two newspapers, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Code one-digit number for each newspaper as follows:

   1 = The Washington Post
   2 = The New York Times

2. Date of Publication: As seen in the newspapers. First, provide the whole date (e.g., 7/18/94) and then code it as follows. If the article was published in 2000, classify them into additional two groups: before June 1 and since June 1. This is because this study consists of two parts: overall analysis and comparative analysis of articles in 1994 (since July) and in 2000 (since June).

   1 = 1994 2 = 1995 3 = 1996 4 = 1997 5 = 1998
   6 = 1999 7 = 2000 (From January to May = 7-1 Since June = 7-2)

3. Type of Article

   1 = Hard News: any news story that is time-sensitive and the purpose of the story is to convey time-sensitive information. Stories in this category have a specified date in the first or second paragraph (e.g., "today," "yesterday," and "Wednesday").
   2 = Feature Story: news story that is not time-sensitive and aims at giving broader and deeper understanding about the subject.
   3 = Editorial: stories appearing on the editorial page.
   4 = Op-Ed: stories appearing on the Op-Ed page. This type of story is usually written by an expert who is not on the staff of the newspaper and often express the opinion counter to that of the newspaper.
   5 = Column: an individual writer's opinion or commentary about the issue. Usually the writer has a steady relationship with the newspaper.
   6 = Other: any story that is not included in the above categories.

4. Length of Article

   The length of article is provided by electronic databases such as Lexis-Nexis and InfoTrac, in number of words. If the article is one identified by "hand search," count the words and write it.

5. Topic

1 = Kim Jong Il: any story that concentrates only on Kim Jong Il as an individual.
2 = North Korea: any story that deals with North Korea, but does not focus on Kim. This category includes topics such as Kim Il Sung's death, North Korean famine, its test-fire of missile, its power structure, and sketches of Pyongyang street life.
3 = North-U.S.: any story that deals with the relationship between North Korea and the United States. Stories about U.S. foreign policy toward North Korea are included in this category.
4 = North-South: any story that deals with the relationship between North and South Korea.
5 = Other: any story that is not included in the above categories.

6. Source: a source is a person or organization that gives information to news reporters. Sources are explicitly identified when news reporters quote or paraphrase information from them in stories.

1 = U.S. official: any U.S. government official. Former officials are not included here.
2 = U.S. other: any U.S. person or organization who is not a present official. Experts in private institute are included here.
3 = North: any source from North Korea. This category includes North Korean officials, civilians, and mass media.
4 = South: any source from South Korea. This category includes South Korean officials, civilians, and mass media.
5 = Defector: any North Korean who fled from North Korea for various reasons. Some of them succeeded in finding asylum in South Korea, while others stayed in neighbor nations such as China.
6 = Other Country: any sources rather than the United States, North Korea, and South Korea. For example, "Chinese news agency," "Japanese analyst," "Russian President" or "Eastern European diplomats."
7 = Multiple: when there is more than one source in describing Kim in an article. For example, when U.S. official and North Korean news agency were used to describing Kim in the same article.
8 = Unspecified: when reporter mentioned information source, but it was so unclear that it was hard to decide which country the source belonged to. For example, "Western analysts," "some experts," "critics," "previous reports" or "Korea watcher."
9 = Observation: when the reporter gives information about Kim without any mention of source. This information is assumed to originate from the reporter's personal observations or knowledge.

7. Title: a short and definite description that precedes the name "Kim Jong Il." Usually it means an official title of a person, but in Kim's case it is more complicated because he did not have proper position for a while.

1 = Positive: any title that calls Kim as a highest leader of a normal country such as "President," as in other countries.

2 = Neutral: any title that does not have any direction about evaluation, such as "leader." If there is no specific title, code it here.
3 = Negative: any title that implies that he is a communist, heir of dynastic succession, or a dictator.

8. Attitude: the overall image that is described in the whole article. This is the article's overall evaluation of Kim. Even though a specific sentence or paragraph may be negative toward him, the whole sentence can be positive, and vice versa. The title of the article sometimes gives a hint about its attitude toward the subject.

   1 = Positive: any article that emphasizes Kim's positive character or his change of attitude toward outside world. For example, "Try to defrost icy relation with South," "N. Korean leader is the star of the summit" or "N. Korea's Kim sheds images of madman."
   2 = Neutral: any article that has both positive and negative descriptions about Kim or any article that does not give any specific description about Kim's image.
   3 = Negative: any article that emphasizes Kim's negative character. For example, "From Stalin to Caligula," "Blurred images of North Korea's 'Junior'" or "The rogues' gallery."

9. Modifier: a word (usually adjective) or a short phrase describing Kim's personality and ability. Usually followed by Kim's name.

   Negative
   1 = Reclusive: such as "reclusive," "mysterious," and "enigmatic."
   2 = Despotic: such as "totalitarian," "communist," and "Stalinist." Code modifier about Kim's cult of personality here.
   3 = Incapable: such as "weak political basis," and "less charismatic."
   4 = Abnormal: such as "irrational," "mentally unstable," "erratic," and "unpredictable."
   5 = Immoral: such as "wicked," "greedy," and "pursuing personal benefit only."
   Positive
   6 = Affable: such as "friendly," and "humorous."
   7 = Capable: such as "maintaining political power firmly," and "well-informed."
   8 = Practical: such as "reasonable," and "moderate." Code the modifiers that imply he is normal here.
   9 = Confident: such as "decisive."
   10 = Active: such as "lead the conversation."
   Neutral
   11 = Unspecified: when there is no specific modifiers or when more than one modifiers was used.

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THE ROMANCE AND REALITY OF COPY EDITING:
A NEWSROOM CASE STUDY

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THE ROMANCE AND REALITY OF COPY EDITING: A NEWSROOM CASE STUDY

Editing textbooks talk about copy editing in an idealized newsroom, where editors upgrade poor work, improve writing, check facts and plug story holes. The books tell students about the romance, but they are light on the reality of burnout, deadline pressures, and the overburden on copy editors. This case study spends two nights with copy editors who push copy through their computers. They are more like technicians than wordsmiths, and the textbooks don't talk about their disappointments.

THE ROMANCE AND REALITY OF COPY EDITING:
A NEWSROOM CASE STUDY

As deadline approached, Joe Young began to think of himself as an editing lawn mower as he ripped and chewed his way through news copy. The fingers of his right hand rapidly played the keyboard-- up, down, right, left, and the blinking cursor on his computer screen followed his commands, turning a figure eight as Young nervously moved his eyes across the VDT. His head bent slightly toward the screen. He leaned into the screen and typed faster than the electronic images could appear. He waited impatiently, tapping his hand on the desk as the screen blinked repeatedly.

Young, 25, is beginning his second year at his first newspaper job. He is a copy editor.

Sam Elder, 50, also is a copy editor. He leaned back in his cushioned office chair and folded his hands behind his head. He stared at the screen. As he read the news story, the cursor sat in one place. As Elder steadily progressed through the story, only his eyes moved. He shifted slowly forward, he studied the screen for a moment, and then he dropped the cursor three lines, slid to the right, and deleted an article before a plural noun. He leaned back in the chair, put his hand to his chin and kept reading. Elder has been working for newspapers for almost 25 years.

Elder and Young (not their real names), work at a daily newspaper in a southern urban area. Each editor volunteered to let me observe his copy editing shift of eight hours, followed by an intense two hour-interview. The purpose of this study was to find out what copy editors do and think. Usually, studies of copy editors focus on their gatekeeping duties or the effects of technology on editors, or copy editor burn out or the professional values of editors.

Yet, we need to consider that the main tasks of copy editors are to prepare copy, fix errors, write headlines, layout pages, find holes in stories, guard the English language against misuse, and stand as the last line of protection against libel. Although many research studies have looked at editing and editors,[1] systematic studies of what copy editors do and think are rare, and no study of copy editing processes has been reported in a peer-reviewed journal since the advent of electronic editing in the 1970s.

By studying the process of editing, I hope to come to a better understanding of editors and why they do what they do. News editing courses are often one of the two staples (along with news reporting) of the nearly 400 college journalism programs in the nation. The teaching of editing skills could be improved by a study that describes how real editors edit. The following study is an exploratory case study of two editors. It will present a three-way comparison between two copy editors--a recent college graduate and a 25-year veteran--and the copy editor model as popularized in journalism textbooks.

DEFINITIONS

In research studies, the term editor is often used loosely to describe newspaper jobs that typically involve management decisions and story selection. The term may or may not include copy editing duties. In this study, the focus is on copy editors who are newspaper employees without management or story selection duties. During the shift they were studied, the copy editors spent most of their time writing headlines and editing copy for errors. They worried about news style and spelling, and they cut stories to fit new holes. The limits of this study left out those editors who mainly design pages, paginate news pages, or work in news slots selecting stories and assigning them to pages and passing them on to other editors to process.

I focused on two copy editors who have no management duties but are held responsible for thousands of words that make up the printed text of an average daily newspaper. They are the last editors to read a news story before a page is printed. This study will describe the skills and thinking of the editors as they meet deadline pressures and fulfill journalistic conventions.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT COPY EDITORS

Research emphasis on copy editors has been generally focused on the study of environmental constraints[2] that affect the decision-making by editors when they select news.[3] These studies indicate that editors operate under constraints of time, space, resource availability, and bias. Other studies have looked at the social pressures in the newsroom or the effects of management involvement.[4]

Typically, studies of editors have focused on what influences news selection. Tuchman, for example, argued that constraints of time and space imposed routine decision making on editors, and that personal bias and journalistic conventions shape both the content and the selection of news.[5]

Other types of studies sometimes have an applied focus, such as measures of editors' rankings of what's important in the editing process. For example, Bremner asked editors to rank the importance of 60 headline faults.[6] Sometimes, editors are asked to rank types of errors they usually find in news copy, or to judge how important mechanics is in journalistic writing.[7] One study found that educators and editors agree that the key skills for copy editors to possess are language, accuracy and fact checking, ethics, headline writing and critical thinking.[8] The authors of one of these studies, however, suggested that managers may be expecting too much from copy editors, and that the amount of coursework in a typical journalism school editing course may be unreasonable because it overburdens students.

When electronic editing was introduced to newspapers in the 1970s, the question of what exactly copy editors did on the job received attention. Video Display Terminals brought about major changes in how copy editors performed their tasks. Randall, for example, compared a newspaper before and after VDTs were installed and found that the VDT-produced newspapers had fewer errors.[9] Garrison as part of his VDT study found that most of a copy editor's time was spent editing stories followed by writing headlines. Wire stories were usually cut from the bottom up and changed to fit the newspaper's style but were rarely reorganized. Editors agreed that accuracy had been improved by VDTs, but that they had to accept more responsibility since fewer editors read each story.[10] The movement to use electronic page makeup has had mixed effects on copy editors: some appreciate the positive aspects of flexibility and control, while others fear that the work is degrading and a burden.[11]

In the 1990s after the American Society of Newspaper Editors reported high levels of discontent on the nation's copy desks,[12] researchers focused on copy editor burnout and dissatisfaction. Cook and Banks found, for example, that the highest level of job burnout is among entry level journalists at small dailies, and that personality and health factors often played key roles in determining burnout.[13] "Understaffing, increased work volume, new technology, and ungrateful supervisors all spell trouble for an overburdened, burned-out copy desk," researchers noted.[14] In a case study, one researcher provided some clues to the problems of the overburdened copy editor: stress created by deadline pressure and management activities was cited as a leading cause of copy editors' complaints.[15]

Copy editors in this study. Although their experiences and ages are different, Elder and Young share many things. They are both males who graduated from Southern public universities with degrees other than journalism. Both became interested in journalism because of their interest in language arts. They began to think of journalism as a career option after they worked at newspapers during summer vacations while they were in college. Neither worked for his high school newspaper, and only Young worked for his college newspaper. Both had received praise from numerous teachers for their writing abilities and were encouraged by their early newsroom experiences.

They are both heavy readers of newspapers, book, and magazines. They both come from middle-class backgrounds, although Elder's childhood was spent in a rural area, while Young lived in an urban area. Neither has children nor is married, although Elder shares a home with a partner. In general, Young is not satisfied with his current job. He prefers working with reporters and has strong ambitions to become a mid-level manager who is involved in producing news, rather than managing the business-side of newspapers. Although Young doubts that there is opportunity for advancement at his current job, he accepts the idea that he must gain experience before he can move to another newspaper for a better job. He notes that he is not active in community events, and he rents a house.

Elder says he is satisfied with his job. He had been a line manager for the afternoon version of the newspaper he now works for, which was folded and the two staffs merged. Elder prefers working more with news gathering and reporters and would like to change jobs. But he strongly insists that he is happy at his job and satisfied with the community, newspaper management (a family-owned newspaper), and benefits. Elder is active in many community activities, has family in the area and owns a home.

CONCEPTUAL FRAME

The major concept applied to editors is gatekeeping. It is traced to the ideas of Lewin who described a gatekeeper as someone who decides which items would continue to flow through communication channels.[16] The concept of gatekeeping was introduced into journalism research by White, who performed a content analysis of stories sent by wire services and passed successfully through a newspaper wire editor to appear in the newspaper.[17] The major limitation of gatekeeping studies are their emphasis on selection process, which is viewed mainly as a function involving constraints.

Expanded Gatekeeping. For this study, gatekeeping is defined as a broader process. Donohue, Tichenor and Olien suggested that the concept of gatekeeping should describe a process of information control that goes beyond selection and includes message shaping.[18] For this study, a gatekeeper includes copy editors who may change one word in a lead as well as those who write a headline. By including message handling under gatekeeping, the average copy editor becomes part of a larger process that describes how media produce messages. As Tuchman noted, gatekeepers learn to do their jobs by being gatekeepers.[19] Copy editors probably learn to edit by being editors.

Research Questions. Overall, recent literature suggests that copy editors are overworked. The American Copy Editors Society has a survey connected to its Web page that asks for information about the process of copy editing at newspapers. More than 120 editors have competed the survey. One editor wrote: "The workload is beyond any reasonable expectations. The pages get done, but very little actual editing is done."[20]

The goal of this study is to continue the process of understanding copy editing. Why are copy editors discontent? What are their job expectations? How does the work meet those expectations? What do editors think when they edit? How do their jobs compare with the image of copy editing in journalism textbooks?

METHOD

This study compares two copy editors and the ideal of copy editing as presented in editing textbooks. The goal of a case study is to provide rich information about a case in a context that sheds light on the research problem. Case studies are valuable because they provide a more valid form of understanding a problem and a better basis for understanding a situation than a quantitative study.[21]

For this study, I spent one eight-hour shift with each of the copy editors. Each worked at a Southern daily newspaper of about 60,000 circulation. Management considers Elder to be a veteran copy editor who is a valuable asset to the copy desk and the newsroom, which is mainly staffed with young, inexperienced copy editors and reporters.[22] As Elder noted, during his 20 years at this same newspaper, he has seen dozens of young reporters and editors come and go. Young is considered a bright copy editor with a promising future, who will probably leave the newspaper for a better job within the next couple of years.

On the nights I observed Young and Elder, they were assigned to "rim work," which meant their duties were limited mainly to editing text, proofing pages, and writing headlines. Other copy editors during the shifts performed multiple tasks that included electronic pagination, story selection, and layout duties. But the focus of this study is the editing process and the values, thinking, and social influences that are in play while the copy editor does the most basic of editing tasks.

During most of my observation, I watched as the copy editors opened and edited news stories and wrote headlines. The editors were told to work in their normal fashion and to share their thoughts if they wished. I occasionally asked what they were doing if I needed more information. As a former journalist with 10 years of experience, I easily understand most of the tasks. Within a week of the observations, I interviewed each copy editor for about two hours. I later shared my work and conclusions with Elder, Young, and a third editor who knows them both. All three editors judged that the conclusions of this study fitted their perceptions of what they do and how they do it, and why they do what they do. Newspaper management easily approved access to the newsroom, and Elder and Young appeared eager and flattered to be chosen for study. I told them that I wanted to know what newspaper editors really did and to compare it with what journalism books said they should be doing. I approached the observations with two, deep-rooted biases based on my long association with newspapers and editors. I believe that copy editors are expected to do too much in too little time and that those constraints affect the quality of editing and their job satisfaction.

EDITING STORIES

Editing generally has been divided into three tasks: coherence editing, global editing and editing for correctness; on a microlevel, editing has been used to describe: rewriting, proofreading for grammatical and spelling errors, revision to improve context or meaning, substantive editing, re-organization to improve the overall story, or working with a writer to change and improve a text.[23]

As a preliminary model, three journalism editing texts were used to describe a copy editor's tasks for this study:[24]

1) They use tools such as computers, pica poles, dictionaries, newspaper archives.
2) They have basic skills involving the use of the electronic tools; for making sure that sentences and paragraphs make sense and cohere; for making the right word (correctly spelled, grammatically sound and stylistically correct) is being used; for ensuring that text is accurate, objective, and fair; for compressing copy to fit space constraints; and for writing story summaries (headlines and cutlines) in very few words.
3) They polish words with their skills to assure headlines are attractive and text serves meaning. They are "wordsmiths" who improve stories at the sentence, paragraph and story levels. They are careful readers who plug holes in stories and make sure that story beginnings are tight and well-written
4) They watch for libel.

5) They have advanced skills such as compiling news stories by using different wire services or local copy to reduce a great number of stories into one, coherent, concise, complete story.
6) They have graphic and layout skills. They may need to know electronic pagination.
7) They develop a sense of news judgement and copy flow.

During observation, I watched for all these skills except No. 6, which was beyond the scope of this study. During the shifts I observed, neither editor compiled a series of stories into one story (No. 5). I asked about this, and the desk copy chief acknowledged that the newspaper should do more compilation. But, the desk chief said, the news desk usually does not have adequate staffing to allocate time to compiling stories. In rare cases, such as important stories with multiple versions from different wire services, the news editor will assign a copy editor to compile stories.

Global editing. This type of editing involves changing organization and structure of a text. During global editing, an editor may even ask a reporter to add chunks of information to a story. The typical journalism editing text devotes much space and attention to this skill.[25]

But Elder and Young both said that they do not have time to do global editing, but they added that if some story was grievously disorganized they might make changes if the changes could be done quickly. They justify their unwillingness to make global changes by noting that the stories they edit, both wire service stories and local news stories, have been edited by other editors (assistant city editors or wire service editors) who have considered the organization, structure, and information content of the story. Elder and Young said they are more likely to make global changes to wire stories, moving information from the end of the story to higher in the story, when they believe the story is likely to be cut during pagination.

Elder said he was reluctant to make substantial changes to material that a reporter and editor, especially in local feature stories, has judged to be appropriate. One of Elder's values is his respect for the professionalism of reporters and other editors. Often during our conversations, Elder, who previously had spent 10 years as a supervising editor for local news, would speak of his work in relation to the functions of other editors and production workers. He cast his responsibilities in a way that made it clear that he thought of himself as part of process of creating a product. For example, in discussing the need to make deadline, Elder talked about the need for the presses to start on time so that the newspaper delivery people, mostly part-time workers who work other full-time jobs, could finish deliveries and be at their other jobs on time.

If copy editors made major changes in local news copy, "people would have a cow," Young said. "I've been told that if something needs major changing to send it back or call a superior's attention to it. The mind set is that copy editors are an extension of the computer system to clean up technical aspects of the story."

One example of global editing occurred when Young, while writing a headline, moved information (about three words) from the middle of a wire news story into the lead. He then wrote a headline that included this newly prominent material. When asked about the move, Young worried whether I thought he did something wrong. He explained that he thought the wire story was slightly stale and needed to have the information in the lead to attract readership. Contrary to the journalism text model, Young said he almost never rewrites the lead of a local news story.

Another time, Young pointed out a wire story that repeated information from the lead in a paragraph later in the story. Young explained that taking out the redundancy would take too much rewriting, and he declined to make the change.

Coherence editing. Both Elder and Young acknowledged that while reading copy, they mainly pay attention to how well the story coheres--do the words make sense, and does the copy read smoothly. The issues are word choice, clarity and understanding.

Journalism editing texts list the types of coherence improvements copy editors should make. Gilmore vaguely describes the task as one of polishing copy, while Westley offers numerous examples of before-and-after changes in copy.[26] The implication made by the textbook authors is that copy editors have some sixth sense that leads them to making improvements by taking out words or recasting sentences. The critical point, the texts say, is careful reading, at least twice or even three times.[27]

In the world of Young and Elder, copy editors only read the stories once. They said time limits prohibit repeated reading. At best, Elder said, his job is to keep embarrassing mistakes out of the newspaper. The first step is finding those mistakes.

Young reads until something stops him. "You go through it, and stop at places that are difficult to understand or don't make sense. I know something is wrong if I have to reread it before going on."

During my observation, coherence changes by Young including adding a "the" before "two shots," and he changed "at" to "to" because the original phrases "didn't sound right." He removed redundant words and often changed the awkward placement of the time element in a sentence. In one story about an arrest of a rape suspect, Young changed "alleged" to "charged," and changed "contended" to "alleged," and changed "sexual offenses" to "sex crimes."

In describing the above changes, Young said he was in a "hunt mode" looking for jargon or antiquated language. He was looking for shorter words that have direct meaning. He wanted to "paint a better picture."

"Don't say, 'He received a fatal gun shot wound.' NO! Say, 'He was shot dead,'" Young said. "I'm not a copy vigilante, but if it sucks eggs, I believe I should make it better."

Elder uses a similar technique. As he reads, he becomes the average newspaper reader. "If I get lost, I back up and say, 'What is this story trying to say?' I know that if I'm lost, the reader will probably get lost, too."

Elder makes far fewer coherence changes than Young. He changed "2 to 4 percent" to "2 percent to 4 percent" for clarity. In another story he took out the 12 from "12 midnight."

Overall, however, Young and Elder made few changes of any type in the stories they edited. Many stories had no changes made, while others had two or three. During the two nights I observed, they edited a total of 55 stories and made a total of 243 changes in copy, including changes made for correctness.

Editing for correctness. Editing textbooks focus on these kinds of errors with chapters devoted to grammar, style, word choice. The strategy of the textbook authors appears to focus on listing of typical words that are misspelled, words that are misused, and grammatical mistakes editors should watch for. But lists seem far from the minds of real copy editors.

Elder said mistakes jump out at him while he's reading. During his shift, most of the mistakes he corrected were related to hyphens: adding them to words such as run-off and 12-step plan, and taking them out of words such as grown-up. When reading proofs he checked jump lines and date lines. He took the "s" out of "backwards." He checked the spelling of six proper names during the night, using the paper's electronic archives.

When do copy editors check something? Young said a bell goes off. "I've been reading along thinking of the major things in the story, then the grammar alarm rings. Or, I know I've seen this before, or I know it's something that can be messed up easily, or I know it has multiple forms and I want to check it."

Among the mistakes Young checked included whether newspaper names should be in italics and whether an event happened the previous Thursday or Friday in a confusing story. In fixing mistakes, Young made far fewer corrections than Elder. Young moved a misplaced modifier to the end of a sentence. He took the year off at the end of a date because the event had happened within the last 12 months. While reading a page proof, Young deleted an extra article before a noun, and he checked whether three words naming a public building should begin with capitals.

Although the textbooks emphasize the importance of spelling, it is a rare consideration for Elder and Young. This is probably due to the proliferation of spell checkers on computer software programs. Young estimated that each story had probably been through at least two spell checks before he read it. Elder did catch one mistake that spell checkers can't catch: he changed a "to" to "too."

Once edited, every story as a matter of desk policy is read by a spell checker before it is shipped to a paginator. Elder and Young agree that the "mindless" spell checker program is a waste of time. They had to repeatedly strike a key to tell the spell checker to skip proper names.

Editing for fit. Elder and Young agreed that the best and fastest way to cut a wire story is to fit the layout of the design editor. They use the computer to justify the story and show the length line by line. They move the cursor to the point that marks the length ordered by the layout editor. They search for the nearest line that lets the story end at a sensible place and then they delete the rest of the story without reading it.

Gilmore's textbook calls such editors butchers. Westley says no self-respecting editor would bite off the end of stories. Elder and Young say it's the only way they can do their jobs and make a deadline.

Although editing textbooks insist that editors read the whole text and carefully cut stories, Young says that type of editing is unrealistic given the time constraints and the large number of stories that he edits each night. Besides, he argued, the ends of wire stories are usually filled with unimportant information, and it makes no sense to read 20-inches of news about Yugoslavia when the layout calls for 6-inches of copy.

Elder and Young said they are more careful when cutting local stories, but they seldom are expected to do so. No local stories were cut the nights I observed the two editors. The copy desk chief told me that minor cuts needed for production purposes are usually made by the pagination editors as they electronically paste up news pages. The paginators, too, usually cut from the bottom, the editor said.

Pressure and deadlines. The pressures on a copy editor may depend on newspaper size. Gilmore tells student editors in his text that although the work pace may be brisk at times, they should have enough time to bring a book or magazine to work and catch up on the important reading they should be doing. Young and Elder, however, have so little free time on the desk that they eat while they copy edit, chewing as they read. Elder took almost 30 minutes to eat a piece of pizza that was cold by the time he finished.

Elder was obsessed with copy flow. He constantly kept track of the number of stories that were waiting to be edited. As he worked, he was aware of wasting time. "My theory is get it right the first time; then you can avoid a scramble later."

Throughout the night, he constantly referred to the approaching deadline of 11 p.m. For example, just before 9 p.m., he takes a cigarette break and said it would be the last one "before the big push." At 10 p.m., after editing his 19th story in the last two hours, he said: "It feels good to be caught up for a while." At 11 p.m., Young told another editor that he was starting to edit stories for the late edition, but if something for deadline needs to be done "call me if you need me."

Elder changed his editing choices as deadline exerted its pressure. As deadline neared, he ignored coherence editing and seldom changed anything unless it was obviously a mistake. One time, he spent less than one minute editing a story and about 30 seconds in writing a headline.

Deadline awareness affects Young, too. He repeatedly checked with other editors to see if their work loads were under control. "Do you need help?" "Can I do something for you?" Questions such as these appear to be a "clock-watching ritual."

Both editors complained that the pace of stories and the repetitive nature of the work made it difficult to maintain interest and alertness. Young looked for ways to break the monotony. "Editing is lonely and frustrating, we need some way to break the tension," Young said as he rocked his head to loosen his tight neck muscles.

One tension breaker was humor. About three hours before deadline only two types of conversation broke the steady clicking and clacking of keys. Besides asking for instructions or information, copy editors tried to be funny, and they often laughed about anything quirky, and they did not hesitate to share it with everyone. For example, Young began work on a local news story that was 4 days old, and he told all the other editors that it was so old that "the seal on the jar lid had popped." As soon as he started to talk, other editors stopped and turned their heads toward him. One editor didn't hear and asked him to repeat the line.

Typically, the short interruptions usually involved some contextual humor about tension, performance, or the odd quality of some news story. Sarcasm, irony and bad puns were favorites. The only rule about talking aloud was that any comment that interrupts others must be some form of shared humor. A conversation's end was signaled with a chuckle and the simultaneous return to typing.

On some nights, early in the shift, some lulls exist in the work, and the pace is not as fast as the last two or three hours before deadline, Elder said. During these periods, Elder will take a break to smoke a cigarette, which requires that he go outside the building. (On busy nights, he might have only two smoking breaks. The night I observed, he took two breaks of about three minutes each before 8 p.m. After deadline he took two 10-minute breaks.) When the pace slows, Young likes to "surf the computer's story queues," looking for interesting stories to read that may not make it into the newspaper. Between stories, he shifted to the story assignment queue to see if any work had been assigned. When there were no stories to edit, he returned to story surfing.

Neither copy editor, however, complained about stress, burn out or pressure. When asked directly, they implied that pressure was part of the job, and they felt challenged by the job conditions.

Role of the editor. Young said copy editors on the rim are "the ultimate micro-managers," who leave the big picture to other editors. "By the time a story gets to us, our job is to pay attention to the tiny details," Young said. "We are a volume dealership in that stuff.

"I basically go in and people throw stuff at me. I'm a processor--that's the way it is when you are starting out. I'm treated as a rookie until I prove myself."

This is not the job Young wanted to do when he became a copy editor. Young has read ads in trade publications and noted that newspapers advertise for copy editors who are wordsmiths. Young complained that he doesn't get a chance to be a wordsmith. "We're technicians, and I don't like it very much."

Elder is more accepting of his role. "I enjoy detail work, dotting the I's and crossing the T's." A copy editor's job is to keep errors out of the newspaper. "I enjoy doing all the little piddley shit."

Organizational pressures. I did not observe direct pressure by upper management (who work days) on the rim copy editors (who work nights). Both Elder and Young commented on how they felt isolated from those types of pressures. Their boss was the news editor, and, as is typical at newspapers, she plays a dual role as a representative of management to the news desk employees and as a representative of her workers to management. Elder noted that while the bosses left him alone, he assumed that the news editor took the brunt of complaints.

Indirectly, and most obviously, upper management exerts the dual pressures to meet deadlines and to produce an error free newspaper. One wall of the newsroom is called the "Hall of Shame." There, the newsroom managers hang examples of notable mistakes. The first night I was in the newsroom, the wall had a letter and news clip from a reader who complained that the editors were sloppy because they had allowed "lead" to appear in a sentence when "led" was called for. The next night the wall contained a front page from a rival, and larger, newspaper. Elder said the front page had been much poorer than the one his paper had produced.

Elder and Young said they like the wall because it allows them to know what upper level management thinks and values. Elder said sometimes he ignores their values. "I want to know what they think, but I'm the one who edits the newspaper." Sometimes, when he doesn't agree with what the editors say, he edits the way he thinks he should.

Making deadlines has been a constant problem at the newspaper. Elder and Young agreed that deadlines should be made and should be absolute, and they perceived strong upper level management pressure to meet deadlines. They seemed unwilling to talk about specific deadline problems at the paper. With their facial expressions and tones, they implied the problem was related to work habits of some of their co-workers whom they did not want to identify.

During the last 25 years some things have changed in the newsroom, Elder said. management style has changed from confrontation to what Elder called the "get-along thing," which is marked by ultra-politeness among newsroom workers. Elder said he missed the old-style atmosphere that was more confrontational and allowed people to fight head-to-head and get things off their chests and then forget about it.

The news desk workers and reporters were so polite that the newsroom seemed like an insurance office. The air seemed to be missing an important staple: the drive and clarity that feeds on tension, anger, and anxiety. For example, Young was given an impossible headline to write in the space given. When the layout editor walked by, Young said, "Boy, you sure have given me some interesting head sizes tonight. These stories are really complex."

The layout editor paused, seemed confused and then almost defensive as she replied softly, "Do you need more space? How about a drop head?"

"No. I'm not complaining. It's just been a challenge."

"Go ahead, take more space. I have some extra room on the page," the layout editor said as she turned around, seeming to forget where she was going. Later that night the layout editor returned and tried to explain why the headline sizes had been so large for such small space, while Young apologized for appearing to complain.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Editing textbooks talk about copy editing in an idealized newsroom, where editors upgrade poor work, improve writing, check facts and plug story holes. The books tell students about the "art" of headline writing, that they are responsible for "captivating readers," and that journalism is a place for "imagination."[28] But Elder and Young push copy through their computers. They do not edit, they process. They are more like technicians than wordsmiths, and the textbooks don't talk about their disappointments and those of copy editors at many newspapers.

Young is obviously not satisfied with his job but believes that he has to gain experiences before moving to a better job where he can be a wordsmith. But he is disappointed that his first newspaper experience is less valuable than what he had expected. Young appeared angry about the limits on his editing responsibilities, but he said that copy editing was the best job he ever had, much better than the factory work he had done in summers while in college. For Young, journalism is still exciting.

Elder appeared to harbor some resentment left over from his demotion during the merger of the papers, but he portrayed himself as the good soldier, willing to do what management wants. He enjoys the tiny details that he attends to. He is satisfied with his work and where he lives.

Elder and Young accept that deadline pressure is a part of journalism, and yet they desire to be real editors in the classic textbook sense. It's too bad that the reality doesn't match the ideal.

Elder and Young are only two copy editors in a world with hundreds of copy editors. Although a case study cannot be generalized to a larger population, I would expect conditions to be similar at small newspapers that have limited budgets and medium-sized newspapers during cutbacks . On the other hand, larger newspapers may provide opportunities for copy editors to be editors in the textbook sense, and it would be informative to expand this study to include editors at larger newspapers. Have they, too, become button-pushers and copy processors?

Many other interesting questions surfaced in this study. One is the relationship between management and copy desk editors. Breed has noted that many management pressures are indirect,[29] and one researcher has found management decisions to be related to copy desk burn out.[30] Under what conditions do managers add stress to the job? Another interesting avenue of research is personality and copy editors--certain personality types may fair better under the various pressures as suggested by Cook and others.[31] Idealism of youth may fade as the copy editor gathers experience: Elder appeared to accept editing conditions more readily than Younger did. Perhaps long-time successful copy editors have certain qualities that make them suitable for the work. Finally the role of humor on the copy desk may be worth further study. It seems to be an important safety valve for pressure. How does humor work, and what are its effects?

Whatever the answers, journalism educators should be concerned about the average journalism student who is more likely to start work at a small newspaper, one that will put the rookie editor under great pressure, while skewering the dreams that had been fed by journalism textbooks and limited college experiences. The typical journalism student will be expected to ram stories through a system that requires technical expertise. Language and words have little to do with most of the copy editing I saw (even though newspaper editors have complained that journalism schools fail to teach students the basic language skills they need to be good copy editors[32]).

Language and words, however, are what attracted Young, Elder and hundreds of other journalists to newspapers. Technological journalism has forced these editors to become something less, something caught in the cog of modern times. While many people may debate the future of journalism education and the relative values of teaching media specific skills or an integrated media approach, the traditional copy editor is still in demand.[33] Editing class teachers need to assure that students understand what copy editors really do.

Journalism education has the responsibility to prepare the student for the modern newsroom. The romantic model of copy editing as presented in textbooks is a story that needs rewriting. Newsroom managers, too, need to rethink about the romance and the reality of copy editing at their newspapers.

Notes

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Sourcing Patterns of National and Local Newspapers: A Community Structure Perspective

This is the paper submitted to the Newspaper Division for the consideration of MacDougall Student Paper Award and presentation at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Convention, Aug. 7-10, 2002 in Miami Beach, FL.

Running heads: Sources

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Abstract

Sourcing Patterns of National and Local Newspapers: A Community Structure Perspective

This study compared the sourcing patterns of national and local newspapers in order to see the degree of official and elite source dominance in political news as well as nonpolitical news. The findings show that local newspapers rely more heavily on official and elite sources than national newspapers do. The trend is more obvious in the coverage of nonpolitical news. The results of this study suggest that the newspaper sourcing patterns reflect the structure of the community they serve.

Sourcing Patterns of National and Local Newspapers: A Community Structure Perspective

Many studies have cast the news media as a subsystem of the community structure within which they function. In other words, the political and cultural characteristics of a community shape the behavior of news media in the community. News media in a small, relatively homogeneous community are likely to reflect the views or agenda of local elites, avoiding conflict or controversial stories that may disrupt the community stability (Hindman, 1996; Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1978, 1980,1985). On the other hand, in a large community in which a variety of power centers with different interests exist, news media have much more leeway to cover conflict between political elites. Because the news media are an integral part of the community system, the role of the media as a "watchdog" or "lapdog" is largely defined by the degree of diversity in the power structure of the community they serve (Olien, Donohue, & Tichenor, 1978, 1980, 1985). This is the finding that most research on the relationship between community structure and American journalism has consistently substantiated.

Methodologically, such studies usually analyze the difference of the number of conflict stories published in small and large community news media. In his study on local conflict with nonlocal groups, for example, Hindman (1996) counted and the

Minnesota local news paper stories mentioning conflicts within or between the local or state agencies of 85 communities in 1965 and 1991. Another way to look at the behavior of the news media in the community structure context is to examine their sourcing patterns. The relation of sources to reporters is not merely as the supplier of news material. It reflects the power relationship between news organization and other institutions in a specific community (Berkowitz, 1999; Reese, 1991) Although researchers using the community structural approach have not dealt with the sourcing patterns of local newspapers stories, some of them have made it explicit that the media tend to reflect the voices of elites in the community they serve. For example, Donohue and his colleagues (1995), using the "guard dog" metaphor, argues that "the media perform as a sentry not for the community as a whole, but for those particular groups who have the power and influence to create and control their own security system" (p.116). A closer look at the sourcing patterns of news media, therefore, would reveal the relation of the community structure to the role of news organization. This is the approach of this study.

In addition, this study attempts to elaborate the approach by comparing the sourcing patterns of national and local news media in the coverage of nonpolitical issues as well as political issues. In a large, heterogeneous community, conflict arises not only from disagreement among political elites but also between government and organized interest groups. Particularly in the coverage of nonpolitical issues, news organizations in a large community have many alternatives to official sources and can index various nonofficial voices.

But in a small, relatively homogenous community, there is no clear distinction between local officials and local elites composed of leaders of business circles or citizen groups. Given the journalistic tendency to prefer authoritative sources, we can reasonably expect that local news organizations are likely to rely on official sources that, in effect, represent the view of the local elites. If the nonofficial sources are used, the voices of those elites rather than layperson will be appear in the news coverage.

The main purpose of this study is to test this proposition that the local news media rely more on official or elite sources in the coverage of nonpolitical issues. In order to examine the use of elite sources, this study will also look at the characteristics of sources in terms of their organizational status. The national and local newspapers were analyzed with the expectation that the papers at opposite ends of the extreme, in terms of community size they serve, will reveal the differences more clearly.

In fact, many studies have analyzed the sourcing patterns of the national and local news media. The findings, however, are inconclusive. Some studies have even found that the degree of reliance by local newspapers on official sources is much less than their national counterparts (Brown, Bybee, Wearden & Straughan, 1987). The inconclusive findings of the previous studies seem to stem partly from the inappropriate application of the sourcing pattern analysis.

Recent studies of news media sourcing patterns have been based largely on the seminal work of Leon Sigal. His analysis of the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* front-page news articles actually aimed to prove the organizational constraint perspective. A news organization, the newspaper in particular, is basically the business entity producing the news product everyday. As employees, reporters have to meet the organizational demand to get the news day after day. For a variety reasons, reporters are bound to resolve the task by relying on the routine channels of news dissemination in the government, the press release and the press conference. First of all, receiving information through routine channels not only eases the reporter's task of newsgathering but also provides the news at a predictable time and place. In addition, they also favor government sources. The government not only has the best resources to constantly supply reporters with information but also an additional merit for reporters and their organizations. Because public officials are regarded as authoritative, reporters can easily avoid the difficult task of deciding newsworthiness and the potential controversies over the credibility of news sources.

Well aware of the reporter's need for authoritative information, officials also try to turn it into their advantage. People in the position of decision-making in the government centralize the distribution of information through routine channels, preempting the outflow of the unfavorable information. Sigal argues that "a great deal of the news is a product of the coupling of two information-processing machines: one, the news organization; the other, the government" (p. 4).

In light of the purpose of his study, it is not surprising that Sigal confined his analysis to the biggest and most prestigious national newspapers, that is, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. He found that more than 70 percent of the sources appeared in the front-page national and foreign news of both papers comes from official sources, and routine information channels outnumber the enterprise channels by well over two to one.

Sigal's method of examining sourcing pattern can effectively be used to test the community structure perspective, but with a caveat. Simply applying his method to the community structure perspective may overlook the different newsgathering mechanism of the national and local news media. Much of the staff in national news organizations is allocated to the coverage of political beats, such as the White House and Congress, which is arguably the playing field of official sources. But local news organization use wire services to cover the national politics or foreign policy, while focusing their resources on the coverage of local issues. Therefore, simply exploring the sourcing patterns across the issues covered would fail to detect the actual differences between the national and local news media. In order to reveal the relationship of differences in community structures to the behavior of the media, this study will focus on sourcing patterns in the coverage of nonpolitical issues as well as political news.

Review of the Literature

One of the legacies of the agenda-setting model is the growing interest in the question of who sets the media agenda (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). The mechanism that determines the media behavior, however, is not easy to pin down. The difficulties in identifying the determinants of the news media behavior stem partly from their complex characteristics in a sense that news organization is a private business entity, but its workers are professionals who are expected to pursue the public interest.

It is not surprising that the earlier attempts to analyze the media behavior focused largely on the characteristics of journalists, characterized by the "gatekeeper" study by White (1950). Following the study, many researchers have explored the norms of the journalism professionals and micro-level news values, such as importance, interest, controversy, the unusual, timeliness, and proximity (Baskette, Sissors, & Brooks, 1982; Dennis & Ismach, 1981;Stephens, 1980).

While these studies endow individual journalists or the journalism profession with considerable power in determining news product, the organizational approach views the goal-directed structure of news organization as molding the behaviors of its members. The organizational approach researchers claim that journalists seem to have autonomy, but it is actually constrained by the organizational routines and allocation of resources such as beats (Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1979; Gans, 1980). New journalists are socialized to the organizational goal and policies through interaction with editors and colleagues (Breed, 1955).

Economic consideration is arguably the most important organizational constraint, at least in the United States, where news organizations are basically the profit-oriented private business. In order to make a profit or just survive in the market, the news organization is bound to cater to, or not to offend, the advertisers who are the major source of its income. Scholars from a political economy tradition have centered their analysis of the news media behavior on the economic aspect (for example, Bagdakian, 2000; McChesney, 2000, Bogart, 1997).

Other critical approach researchers have focused on the ideological aspect of the news product, claiming that media messages reflect and disseminate the views of the dominant groups in a society. In this view, media institutions serve a hegemonic function by making the dominant ideology natural and commonsensical (Hall, 1982; Curran, Gurevitch, & Woollacott, 1982; Gitlin, 1980).

The community structural perspective also emphasizes the close connection between the news media and power elites. But the relationship between news media and power elites is not uniform across the communities. The degree of news media subservience to power blocs depends on the degree of pluralism of a community. In other words, community power structure sets the boundaries within which news media function. Much of research on the relationship between the community structure and the behavior of the news media have been conducted by Tichnor, Donohue, Olien, and their colleagues. They composed the community pluralism index, based largely on the population of the community, the nature of the community's economic base, the number of civic organizations, and the community's proximity to major metropolitan areas (Griffin & Dunwoody, 1995; Demers, 1994; Tichnor, Donohue, & Olien, 1980). More pluralistic communities are likely to be larger and more structurally differentiated and to have a greater diversity of power centers. News media serving pluralistic communities tend to perform a "feedback" function, that is, a watchdog role. On the other hand, less pluralistic communities are smaller with less diverse viewpoints. The homogeneity of the community restricts the role of news media primarily to the "distribution" function focusing on the consensus, instead of conflict, of local establishment (Donohue, Tichnor, & Olien, 1968, 1973, 1980).

While Donohue and his colleagues have focused on the newspaper reporting of conflict within the community, Hindman (1996) extends the model to include the coverage of conflict with nonlocal groups, such as the state government. In his analysis of Minnesota newspapers from 85 communities, Hindman not only confirmed that newspapers in communities with higher levels of structural pluralism contain more internal conflict stories than newspapers in less pluralistic communities. He also found that newspapers in less pluralistic communities tend to report more stories on conflict with nonlocal groups than newspapers in more pluralistic communities. The author suggests that this is because the homogeneous communities cannot tolerate internal conflict that may threaten the consensual nature of the community. But "conflict with out-groups may increase the internal cohesion of the group by helping to define the group identity and boundaries" (p.717).

The work by Brown, Bybee, Wearden and Straughan (1987) was arguably the first attempt to tackle the community structure perspective by comparing the sourcing patterns between national and local newspapers. They partially aimed to look at the change from Sigal's study by analyzing the information sources and channels that appeared during 1979-1980 in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* as well as in four local North Carolina newspapers. They found that the reliance on official sources by the two national newspapers had decreased from 78.1 percent in Sigal's study to 54.7 percent. The reliance on routine information channels, such as official proceedings and press releases, showed no clear change (55.6% and 56%).

Comparing the national and local newspapers, however, Brown et al. found that four local newspapers contained fewer official sources (48.4%) than national newspapers (54.7%) did. They also discovered that enterprise information channels in local newspaper stories (39%) outnumbered that of national newspapers (26%). Summarizing the findings, Brown et al. argued, "On the whole, stories in local papers seem to best meet the basic expectations of a pluralistic medium" (p.49).

In his replication of the Brown et al.'s study to television news stories, however, Berkowtiz (1987) found the hypotheses to be inconclusive. In his analysis of national and Indiana local television newscasts, the official sources cited accounted for 49.3 percent, which less than that of national broadcasts (48.6), although the difference was not statistically significant. The reliance on routine information channels also did not produce a meaningful difference between local (75%) and national newscasts (71%). What he found is the fact that television journalists, regardless of national or local, rely heavily on official sources and routine information channels.

As stated earlier, the inconclusive findings in those studies appear to have something to do with the design of the study that overlooked the different newsgathering mechanisms of national and local news media. Foreign policy, the military, and domestic politics that the national news media prefer to cover are the areas in which official sources and non-enterprise information channels are pervasive. Indeed, Brown et al. analyzed the difference in reliance on information channels between national and local newspapers in terms of topics. They found the use of routine channels less than 50 percent in national newspapers stories about the military (42.9%) and high about the government (63.3%) and politics (57.5%), while local newspapers stories about the government (50%) and politics (36.4%) exhibited less reliance on routine channels. Because they did not mention the information sources in terms of topics, it is impossible to see the degree of official dominance in nonpolitical topics.

But in their examination of sources cited in national security reporting by twenty-three reporters for seven major newspapers, Hallin, Manoff, and Weddle (1993) found that governmental sources accounted for 86 percent of all attributions. The implication of this study is that just comparing the staff written articles of national and local newspapers, excluding the wire services, is likely to result in the favorable evaluations of the local newspaper performance in terms of the reliance on official sources. In order to make a reasonable comparison of national and local newspapers and the appropriate application of sourcing analysis technique to the community structure perspective, this study is designed to focus on the nonpolitical news as well as political news.

Before formulating hypotheses, the definitions of the major terms used in this study are in order. Nonpolitical news in this study refers to all the articles whose topics are not related to foreign policy, the military, and domestic politics, including local political stories, which actually occupied a small chunk of the local stories analyzed in this study. Concerning the sources, official and nonofficial sources are distinguished by the characteristics of the organization that she/he belongs to, while the elite and nonelite distinction draws on his/her status in the organization.

Hypotheses

Based on the literature reviews, the present study tests the following hypotheses:

1) Local newspapers will use more governmental officials as news sources in the reporting of nonpolitical topics than national newspapers.
2) Local newspapers will use more information originating from routine channels

in the reporting of nonpolitical topics than national newspapers.

3) Local newspapers will use more elite sources (executives, spokesperson, and experts) in the reporting of nonpolitical topics than people identifiable as nonelite sources (workers or citizens) than national newspapers.

Method

The samples consisted of two randomly selected six-day weeks (no Sundays) during 1999 for the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* front-page news stories including jumps. Due to the accessibility to the archives, the samples of three local newspapers in Missouri were selected from period of 1999-2002. The local papers include the Springfield News-Leader (weekday circulation of 63,545), the St. Joseph News-Press (39,000), and the Columbia Tribune (18,800).

Stories less than two column-inches and editorial announcements were excluded. The primary unit of analysis was citation. Each time a source was cited, the identity and information channel was coded. A source was defined as any person, institution, or document to which the reporter explicitly attributed information. If the same source appeared several times in the news article, it was coded as one source. Stories were coded into the following categories:

Origin of Story: Stories were categorized as staff written, wire service, or others.

Topic: Each story was categorized into 16 topics: foreign policy, the military, politics, crimes, disaster/accident, economy/business, public moral issues (such as drugs and abortion), health, welfare, education, art, sports, science/invention/technology, religion, litigation, and miscellaneous.

Information and source is coded into the following categories:

Information Channels: Information identified was coded as routine (official proceedings, press conferences, staged demonstrations), informal (background briefings, leaks, non-governmental proceedings) or enterprise (interviews, reporter's independent research).

Primary Channels: The primary channels for each story were identified. This was defined as the channel for information that comprises the lead and/or the major portion of the story as a whole and accounts for the timing of its appearance in the news. The categories included routine, informal, enterprise, and mixed.

Affiliation: Sources were coded into 33 sub-categories, falling into seven main categories. The seven categories included U.S. Government, State/Local Government, Foreign Government, Affiliated U.S. Citizen, Unaffiliated U.S. Citizen, Foreign Citizen, and other.

Primary Source: The primary supplier of information of the story was coded as public officials, affiliated citizen, nonaffiliated citizen, others, and mixed.

Organizational Status: Each source was coded by his/her position in an organization. Categories included executive (someone in a decision-making position), spokesperson, expert/professional, worker, others including position not specified, and unaffiliated citizen.

The author coded all the material. An additional coder assisted in an intercoder reliability check for a subsample of 32 stories. Intercoder reliability tests by a second coder averaged a Scott's Pi of .81 over the six coding measures.[1]

Findings

A total of 241 news items (national 139, local 66, wire service 36) were analyzed, identifying 1,372 sources and information channels (national 987, local 254, wire service 131). The average number of sources in staff written stories from two national newspapers (the *Times* and the *Post*) was 7.1. The average for three Missouri local newspapers was 3.8, and 3.6 for wire services. It is noted that the *Times* used no wire service story in its front-page analyzed for this study, and the *Post* used eight articles from the Washington Post Foreign Service, its own wire service division. Therefore, the predominant number of wire service stories appeared in the local newspapers.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that local newspapers would use official sources more than national newspapers. Table 1 shows the affiliation of sources used in the political and nonpolitical news.

--- Table 1 and Table 2 about here ---

Not surprisingly, officials at the federal level accounted for well over 60 percent in the national newspapers political news. Local newspapers also rely heavily on the officials at the state and local level in the political news coverage. It is notable that official sources used in the national newspapers include the foreign government officials while local newspapers do not. As explained earlier, this is because local newspapers use wire services to cover the issues concerning international affairs. All together, official sources in the political topics account for 80.5 percent in national newspapers, while they occupy 90 percent in local newspapers. The difference in the reliance on official sources between national and local newspapers becomes obvious in the nonpolitical news. The proportion of official sources in the national newspapers decreases to 33.9 percent, but that of local newspapers amounts to 50.9 percent. The difference was also statistically significant. It is interesting that the percentage of sources affiliated to government in the coverage of nonpolitical news by the national newspapers is less than that of affiliated citizens. This suggests that when it comes to nonpolitical issues, national newspapers have greater alternatives to official sources than local newspapers have, which is the proposition of the community structure perspective.

Table 2 concerns the primary sources of each story, revealing similar results. In the political news, all the local newspapers sources are public officials, and national newspaper stories also rely heavily on public officials. In nonpolitical coverage, the reliance on public officials in the national newspapers decreases dramatically to 31.2 percent, while that of local newspapers still remain 50 percent. But a statistical test was not conducted because of the small numbers in some cells.

Hypothesis 2 was also verified. It predicted that local newspapers would have more information originating through routine channels than enterprise channels compared to national newspapers.

--- Table 3 and Table 4 about here ---

Table 3 indicates that in nonpolitical news, local newspapers use more information through enterprise channels (51.9%) than routine channels (43%). But the proportion of enterprise channels (72.4%) in the national newspapers far exceeds that of local newspapers. The difference was also statistically significant. Based on this finding, it is hardly appropriate to say that local newspapers perform better than their national counterparts according to ideal pluralistic expectations as Brown and her colleagues argued. This is also supported in terms of primary information channels. Table 4 shows that across the political and nonpolitical news, the local newspapers stories originate more from routine channels than national newspaper stories do. The trend is more obvious in the nonpolitical news, where 51.9 percent of local newspapers stories are routine channels compared with 35.1 percent of national newspapers stories.

Hypothesis 3 looks at the organizational status of sources used in the newspapers, which is displayed in Table 5.

--- Table 5 about here ---

The result also supports the hypothesis. Table 5 shows that in political news, the reliance on elite sources in national and local newspapers is 81.2 and 97.5 percent, respectively. In nonpolitical news, it decreases to 61.7 and 75.7 percent, respectively, but there are no significant changes in the difference between political and nonpolitical news. The message of this finding is clear. Local newspapers stories rely more on the elite sources than national newspapers do across the political and nonpolitical news. It is notable that in political news, 90 percent of local newspapers sources are executives while the voice of unaffiliated citizens is not heard. In nonpolitical news, voices of unaffiliated citizens in local newspapers appear but much less frequently than in national newspapers.

Throughout most criteria analyzed in this study, the performance of wire services was closer to, sometimes worse than that of local newspapers. In the coverage of political news, 87 percent of information in wire service originated from official sources, much higher number than in local newspapers (55%). In nonpolitical news, it reduced to 50 percent, slightly lower than local newspapers (52.3%), but still much higher than national newspapers (33.9%). In terms of information channels, routine channels accounted for 67.8 percent in the coverage of political news of wire services. It is similar to the proportion in local newspapers (67.5%). In nonpolitical news, information originating from routine channels occupied 34.1 percent in wire services, lower than in local newspapers, but, again, much higher proportion than in national newspapers (22.5%). It is interesting to note that in terms of information channels, information originating from informal channels is distinguishably higher in wire service stories than in national and local newspapers. This seems to have something to do with fact that news sources regard the wire services as the most appropriate medium for quick and vast dissemination of leaks or background briefings.

The only area in which wire services perform best is the reliance on nonelite sources in the coverage of nonpolitical news. The percentage of elite sources appeared in the nonpolitical coverage by wire services was 59.1 percent, which was lower than in local and national newspapers (77.6% and 64.7%, respectively). Considering the fact that local newspapers use fewer wire service stories in the coverage of nonpolitical news (in this study, only 44 sources), however, the overall impact of wire services in this area seems to be minimal.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings in this study indicate unambiguously that local newspapers play the role of the distribution of elite views rather than the role of feedback of nonelite views. The reliance of local newspapers on official sources and routine information channels is more prominent in the nonpolitical news. Whether they are officials or nonofficials, sources appeared in the local newspapers are skewed significantly toward to a group of elites. These findings show the mechanism of local newspapers in the community they serve. By indexing the views of the local power centers not only in the coverage of political coverage but also in the nonpolitical news, local newspapers work to help maintain the stability of community.

The wire service stories in the local newspapers are the window through which local readers can see the affairs beyond their immediate environment, especially the national politics and international affairs. Considering the findings in this study that wire service stories also relay the events through officials, it is not exaggeration to say that local readers are virtually bombarded by the official versions of worldviews.

At first glance, the performance of the national newspapers has improved a lot over the last decades. In his analysis of the *Times* and the *Post* from 1949-1969, Sigal found 78.1 percent of sources cited in the stores from national and foreign desks were official sources. Routine channels also accounted for 55.6 percent while enterprise channels were 27.8 percent. This study shows that public officials in stories originated from national and foreign desks reduced to 61.2 percent.[2] The routine information channels also have decreased to 34.2 percent, while enterprise channels have risen to 54.4 percent. Despite improvement, it is still disappointing in terms of source diversity that public officials comprise well over 55 percent of all sources used in the most prestigious papers in the United States. However, this study reveals the situation is much worse in the local newspapers.

Critical approach researchers claim that the real power of the media lies in its definition of the situation covered. Hall, for example, argues that if people's actions depend on the way situations are defined, then the process of creating situational definitions becomes important. The saturation of elite sources and routine information channels in the local newspaper coverage of nonpolitical as well as political news, therefore, may have important consequences for democracy. Without diverse opinions being heard, it is hard to say that the opinions and decisions of local residents are the results of the informed deliberation.

Of course, this study is not without flaws. First of all, the present study analyzed only local newspapers in Missouri. It may be inappropriate to generalize the findings based on one state. In addition, the sample size of news stories in local and national newspapers is not evenly split, which will further restrict the generalization of the findings of this study.

Despite its limitations, however, the findings of this study clearly indicate that the predominant portion of information in the local newspapers is shaped by official and elite sources. This should not be viewed as conspiracy or a haphazard connection between local reporters and local elites. The behavior of news media cannot be understood without a consideration of the system to which they belong. Even if there are minor variances, the role of the news media is largely conditioned by the characteristics of the community the news media serve. In this regard, the findings of this study can serve as another indicator of the community structural perspective.

NOTES

[1] The author thanks Coulter Jones for his help with the intercoder reliability check.
[2] Brown and her colleagues also found the improvement compared with Sigal's findings. But they analyzed "straight news," while Sigal used stories that originated from national and foreign desks. The present study used the stories of national and foreign desks in order for the accurate comparison.

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Table 1. Information Source of National, Local Newspaper and Wire Services by Political v. Nonpolitical News[a]

	Political news[b]			Nonpolitical news[c]		
	National Newspapers (N=426)	Local Newspapers (N=40)	Wire Services (N=87)	National Newspapers (N=561)	Local Newspapers (N=214)	Wire Services (N=44)
U.S. Government	63.6%	2.5%	55.2%	9.1%	4.7%	20.5%
State/Local Government	6.1	87.5	4.6	17.5	46.2	9.1
Foreign Government	10.8	0.0	33.3	7.3	0.0	22.7
Official sources	**80.5**	**90**	**93.1**	**33.9**	**50.9**	**52.3**
Affiliated U.S. Citizen	8.9	5	1.1	38	29.4	6.8
Unaffiliated U.S. Citizen	1.9	0.0	0.0	20	16.4	9.1
Foreign Citizen	7	0.0	3.4	7.3	0.0	31.8
Other	1.6	5	2.3	0.9	3.3	0.0
Nonofficial sources	**19.5**	**10**	**6.9**	**65.2**	**49.1**	**47.7**

a. Political news includes topics concerning foreign policy, military, and domestic politics.

b. Chi-square = 219.152 d.f = 6 p<.01

c. Chi-square = 95.537 d.f = 6 p<.01

* Chi-square tests in this study were conducted only to national and local newspapers. Wire services columns were inserted in the tables for the purpose of comparisons.

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Table 2. Primary Source of National, Local Newspapers and Wire Services by Political v. Nonpolitical News

	Political news			Nonpolitical news		
	National Newspapers (N=62)	Local Newspaper (N=12)	Wire Services (N=24)	National Newspapers (N=77)	Local Newspaper (N=54)	Wire Services (N=12)
Public Officials	82.3	100.0	95.8	31.2	50.0	50.0
Affiliated Citizen	3.2	0.0	0.0	31.2	20.4	25.0
Unaffiliated Citizen	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.7	11.1	16.7
Others	3.2	0.0	4.2	6.5	7.4	0.0
Mixed	11.3	0.0	0.0	19.5	11.1	8.3

* Chi-square test was not conducted due to the small numbers in several cells of the table.

Table 3. Information Channel of National, Local Newspapers and Wire Services by Political v. Nonpolitical News

	Political news			Nonpolitical news[a]		
	National Newspapers (N=426)	Local Newspaper (N=40)	Wire Services (N=87)	National Newspapers (N=561)	Local Newspaper (N=214)	Wire Services (N=44)
Routine	44.6	67.5	67.8	22.5	43.0	34.1
Informal	15.5	5.0	23.0	5.2	5.1	15.9
Enterprise	39.9	27.5	9.2	72.4	51.9	22.0

a. Chi-square = 32.973 d.f = 2 p<.01

Table 4. Primary Channel of National, Local Newspapers and Wire Services by Political and Nonpolitical News

	Political news			Nonpolitical news		
	National Newspapers (N=62)	Local Newspapers (N=12)	Wire Services (N=24)	National Newspapers (N=77)	Local Newspapers (N=54)	Wire Services (N=12)
Routine	45.2	66.7	70.8	35.1	51.9	58.3
Informal	30.6	8.3	20.8	5.2	3.7	8.3
Enterprise	21.0	25.0	4.2	50.6	35.2	33.3
Mixed	3.2	0.0	4.2	9.1	9.3	0.0

* Chi-square test was not conducted due to the small numbers in several cells in the table.

Table 5. Organizational Status of Information Sources of National, Local Newspapers and Wire Services by Political and Nonpolitical News

	Political news[a]			Nonpolitical news[b]		
	National Newspapers (N=426)	Local Newspapers (N=40)	Wire Services (N= 87)	National Newspapers (N=561)	Local Newspapers (N=214)	Wire Services (N= 44)
Executives	58.5	90.0	64.4	33.5	56.1	31.8
Spokesperson	9.2	2.5	14.9	9.1	4.7	13.6
Expert/ professional	13.6	5.0	4.6	19.1	15.0	13.6
Elite	**81.2**	**97.5**	**83.9**	**61.7**	**75.7**	**59.0**
Worker	1.4	2.5	1.1	4.6	4.2	6.8
Unaffiliated citizen	3.8	0.0	1.1	18.0	13.6	15.9
Non-elite	**5.2**	**2.5**	**2.2**	**22.6**	**17.8**	**22.7**
Other	13.6	0.0	13.9	15.7	6.5	18.2

a. Chi-square = 17.184 d.f = 5 $p < .05$

b. Chi-square = 36.887 d.f = 5 $p < .01$

Running Head: A DIFFERENT NUCLEAR THREAT

A Different Nuclear Threat:

A Comparative Study of the Press Coverage of the Three Mile Island Nuclear Accident and the Chernobyl Nuclear Accident in Two Soviet and Two American Elite Newspapers

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Nuclear energy is perhaps the one technological invention that has transformed human progress and human history in terms beyond what historians and social scientists dared to predict. In the post-World War II years, nuclear power grew to be the defining factor in determining the international balance of power and the distribution of political and economic influence. Ultimately, the possession of the technological and scientific basis to produce and maintain nuclear weapons and energy penetrated the struggle for world power and gave a threatening dimension to the already existing ideological confrontation between the Soviet Union and the Western capitalist societies.

Depending on the observer's viewpoint, the discovery of nuclear energy is lauded as one of humanity's greatest scientific triumphs or lamented as the ultimate Faustian bargain. Yet, the importance of nuclear power over the years has been put beyond doubt and has defined the very terms in which we perceive the ideological opposition of the Cold War and the accompanying hazards of the nuclear weapons race.

Therefore, in the nuclear age, the news media play a central and even growing role in society, defined and often, controlled by its technological inventions. Audiences often learn how to conduct themselves in ordinary and extreme social and work situations through the mass media, but they also learn how to evaluate the major social institutions and their actions following the news coverage. Despite the fundamental political and ideological differences between the Soviet and the Western world, however, this statement held true for both democratic and totalitarian societies. In the United States, the news media are deemed powerful guardians of political norms because the American public believes that a free press should keep it informed about the acts and the decisions of the government. This is one of the basic beliefs of the role of the news media in democratic societies-in democracies, governments are viewed as fallible servants of the people. The professional media organizations are regarded as objective reporters of good and evil who scrutinize the passing scene on behalf of a public that can and must appraise the performance of the officials. In contrast to this view, the role of the news media in the Soviet society was determined by its power to influence and mobilize the social and political system. For the Soviet press, there was no pretense to "objectivity," as understood and practiced in the West. On the contrary, the press ought never be seen as a mere reporter of "the news"-rather, it was the duty of the journalist to "change the world" and raise the level of class-consciousness and social cohesion.

While freedom of expression is certainly a sign of a democratic society that functions without the constraints of a major political ideology, it does not guarantee the complete lack of economic, cultural or social domination of the ruling class in society. The concept of hegemony (see Gramsci, 1971) seems useful for a coherent analysis of cultural practices without losing the plurality and the particularity of democratic theory. Gramsci used the term hegemony to explain the ways in which a dominant class secures domination by establishing political, cultural, ideological and moral leadership. For Gramsci, class domination in an advanced capitalist society was characterized by hegemony, or rule through a mixture of consent and coercion, which contributed to the stability of the social system. Thus, in democracy, hegemony provides an ideology that supports political society and encourages consent by the dominant class. When hegemony in civil society is strong, political domination is easily achieved without reliance on coercion. In this ideological and cultural domination of the elites in Western societies, the news media play a crucially important role. This is particularly true in cases of national emergencies and hazardous situations threatening the public safety and the local and international environment. Nuclear accidents, beyond doubt, present such critical moments and the crucial role of the news media in reporting these events is unquestioned.

In the Cold War environment, nuclear power presented yet another dangerous weapon of destruction. However, nuclear power used for civilian purposes served the opposite purpose-it was a demonstration of progress, a sign of technological advancement, an indication of prosperity and higher scientific development. The question of how safe nuclear energy really was and how well authorities communicated radiation safety issues to the public is yet to be explored. Moreover, when political interests are the major determinants of international relations, the news media, research has shown, play a significant role in forming public opinion and placing national and international events in the public eye. This study provides an analysis of the news coverage of the two of the most massive nuclear industry failures of our times, Three Mile Island in the United States and Chernobyl in the Soviet Union. While scholars in mass communication research have explored the news coverage of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, it seems necessary to establish how the two press systems of the superpowers covered these important nuclear accidents. Three Mile Island and Chernobyl provide an appropriate parallel between the social and political conditions dictated by the Cold War. Even more, the press coverage of these nuclear failures might provide an important indication not only to the behavior of the press in moments of national emergency, but also to its role either as supporter or contenders of the dominant ideology of society.

This study examines two elite U.S. and two elite Soviet newspapers to analyze the coverage of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl and the role of ideology in deciding the content of the news. A quantitative and qualitative analysis will be conducted to determine the connection between the empirical observations and theoretical impression of the relationship between the news media and the dominant ideology of each society.

Literature Review

It has become commonplace in mass communication research to emphasize not only journalism's role in the dissemination of information, but also the news media's contribution to the construction of meaning in society (Carey, 1975; Hall, 1982; Gitlin, 1980). Influenced by journalistic routines and practices (Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978), news stories as symbolic accounts provide the public with definitions of social and political reality. The current focus on the news media as significant agencies of symbolic production reflects a broader, paradigmatic shift away from a transmission model of communication to a cultural or ritual model of communication (Barkin and Gurevitch, 1987; Carey, 1975). This shift has renewed interest in the news media's ideological construction of reality in the news.

However, conflicting interpretations of the news media's relationship to political authority have been a significant part of mass communication research for a long time. While numerous studies have noted the news media's contribution to the construction of meaning, neo-Marxist researchers have argued that news content routinely supports and extends a dominant ideology. In this view, journalistic constructions of reality legitimize and reinforce the political and economic status quo; as agencies of social control, news organizations denigrate and restrict dissent (Hallin, 1987; Hall, 1982; Dahlgren, 1982; Gitlin, 1980).

These observations are important because they challenge the long-established idea that the news media are powerful guardians of political norms growing out of the public belief that a free press is vitally important to the existence of a democratic society. However, the practice of the news media is less clear-cut than its theoretical frame. In the United States, neither news people nor governmental officials are completely at ease with the media "watchdog" role (Graber, 1993). While journalists claim for themselves principles of objective and unbiased coverage, for many communication scholars objectivity is less of an ideal than a tactical process in news reporting intended for news media institutions to create a perception of centrist ideology and to attract and preserve a mass audience (Ognianova and Endersby, 1996). As Fishman (1980) pointed out, "ideological hegemony in the news media can occur without the direct intervention of publishers or editors, without the existence of informal news policies into which reporters are socialized, and without secret programs in news organizations to recruit reporters sharing a particular point of view" (p. 140). The ideological character of the news often follows from sources other than the journalist's immediate social environment and the rules of the profession. On the contrary, news bias often originates in political and social conditions, deeply rooted in the structural organization of authority in society.

Mass communication research for many years has examined the power of the news media and their role in the organizational structure of society. During the interwar period, for instance, a relatively uncomplicated view of the media as all-powerful propaganda agencies brainwashing a susceptible and defenseless public was offered. However, a reassessment of the mass media during the late 1940s, 50s and 60s gave rise to another academic orthodoxy--that the mass media have only a very limited influence. Underpinning this reassuring conclusion about the lack of media influence was a repudiation of the mass society thesis on which the presumption of the media power had been based (Curran et al., 1982).

During the 1960s and 70s, the limited model of media influence was attacked from several directions. While mass communication researchers challenged many of the discoveries of the empirical effects tradition, Marxists and neo-Marxists developed their own critical tradition which had a growing influence on mass communication theory during the 1970s. According to their view, the media were ideological agencies that played a central role in maintaining class domination and in reinforcing dominant social norms and values that legitimize the social system. However, recent developments in mass communication theory have demonstrated that the concept of mass media power as means of social control is much more complex and intricate than was first suggested by the Marxist critique of the mass society and the mass media as disseminators of the ruling-class ideology.

Three Mile Island and Chernobyl in the News Media

Stephens (1980) contended that the story of Three Mile Island was generally one of information—"its presence, absence and evasive nature" (p. 5). In reporting a nuclear incident which posed a severe threat to the public safety journalists were facing a new, unprecedented, type of event to cover on an otherwise-slow news day. "This was a story of confusion, waste and ineptitude in search, often not for information, truth or success, but for public attention" (p. 73).

The magnitude of this event undoubtedly involved immense news media attention. As many authors have argued, the press was at the center of Three Mile Island. The press was charged with interpreting the event for the nation. However, as Stephens also contended, when accepting this task, the news media came under more criticism than any group involved—criticism for sensationalism, for being antinuclear, for being pronuclear and for not keeping reactor specialists on the reporting staff.

Rubin (1982) conducted thorough research on the amount and nature of information about the TMI disaster released to the public. In a content analysis of the two major wire services (AP and UPI), the three broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC), and the three major newspapers (the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*), Rubin recorded the coverage of specific critical factors and the sources of the available information. Rubin also explored the sources providing the reporters with information and how reporters were in turn interpreting and presenting the information to the public. This study discovered that the complex motivations of the sources and the peculiar needs of journalists contributed most to the poor flow of information to the public. Rubin contended that the public right to know was impeded for the most part because sources were forced to operate under enormous pressure and had little access to accurate information. However, he also conceded that journalists needed a fuller understanding of nuclear technology and science in general to communicate scientific uncertainty with greater precision and accuracy.

In a comparative study of the Three Mile Island and the Chernobyl accidents, Rubin (1987) discovered that while there were many striking parallels in the flow of information during both nuclear catastrophes, ranging from absence of emergency communication plans to the deliberate withholding of data on radiation releases, there were also many significant differences. Rubin's analysis demonstrated that information about the accident at TMI was available in greater quantity in shorter time and with fewer restrictions than Chernobyl. Nevertheless, he pointed out that both U.S. officials and the utility personnel of the TMI power plant were more protective of the nuclear industry than open about faults and problems with nuclear technology. For the most part, however, Rubin contended that the complex relationship among the press, the government and the public becomes even more fragile in crucial and sensitive public issues such as these. To further exemplify the difficulty of drawing a clear line between the Western press approach to handling a nuclear disaster and that of the Soviets, Rubin quoted Hans Blix, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency: "The Soviet reporting was late, meager, but probably not untrue. The Western reporting was fast, massive and often misleading. Can there be not anything in between?" (p. 54).

In the immediate aftermath of Chernobyl, an entirely new set of questions about the role of the news media in covering nuclear disasters was raised. Many parallels were drawn between the press coverage of the Three Mile Island and the reaction of the news media to this unprecedented environmental problem. In a content analysis of the radiation reports in the U.S. news media, Friedman, Gorney, and Egolf (1987) discovered that the press and television failed to provide enough radiation or risk information in their coverage of the Chernobyl accident. To support their argument, the authors also examined the results of different studies of the TMI accident, which generally led to the conclusion that the U.S. coverage of the TMI radiation was "abysmally inadequate." The Task Force on the Public's

Right to Information of the President's Commission on the Accident at TMI charged the reporters covering TMI with making improper comparisons and factually impossible statements and providing insufficient background information (Rubin & Cunningham, 1980).

On the other hand, Wilkins and Patterson (1987) analyzed the Chernobyl news coverage from a different angle. They contended that the news media committed fundamental errors of attribution in their coverage of a risk situation, such as Chernobyl, by treating it as a novelty, failing to analyze the entire system and using insufficiently analytical language. A very important observation which Wilkins and Patterson's qualitative analysis illustrated is that the news media failed to analyze fully the technological and social system in which the event occurred. Moreover, the authors contended that the news reports of the Chernobyl accident tended to blame people and institutions for what appeared to be societal problems that needed to be addressed in a different manner. Also, the content analysis of television network news related to the Chernobyl accident indicated that the news media, in covering an event of such enormous magnitude, used a cultural and dramatic frame for what risk experts viewed as primarily technological problems. "Television viewers, for example, were not told that Chernobyl was considered in some respects a 'normal accident' but that Chernobyl was an 'accident' of an inept, callous, and secretive political system" (p. 87).

Another study of the television news coverage of Chernobyl contended that Soviet television manifested all elements of the control, the persuasive and the hortatory functions expected of the media by the new regime initiated by Gorbachev (Mickiewicz, 1988). Mickiewicz also contended that the Soviet authorities were trying to counteract the heavy criticism from the Western world of the lack of information and access to Chernobyl by staging Western-styled televised news conferences, which however, were carefully controlled exercises with foreign journalists frustrated by their inability to ask searching questions.

Similarly, a content analysis by Eribo and Gaddy (1992) which examined the press coverage of the TMI and the Chernobyl nuclear accidents demonstrated significant differences between the press coverage of the two nuclear accidents in the United States and in the Soviet Union. Their content analysis of the *New York Times* and *Pravda* compared the Chernobyl news reports with those of the Three Mile Island accident and found that the *New York Times* gave earlier, greater and more detailed coverage to the nuclear accidents at both Chernobyl and TMI.

A qualitative study conducted by Young and Launer (1991) presented another perspective on the nature of the Soviet press coverage of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. By reviewing the coverage of the accident in three Soviet newspapers, *Pravda*, *Izvestiya* and *Pravda Ukrainy*, and on Soviet television news, the authors contended that the coverage of Chernobyl was not entirely uniform, but went through several distinct stages which were highly influenced by the changing political and social conditions of the Soviet society. The authors pointed out that while the initial coverage of Chernobyl was characterized by the traditional Soviet silence when disasters were involved, the continuing coverage of the accident both in the press and in television was unprecedented in depth, volume and intensity. However, the Soviet media coverage in the immediate aftermath of the disaster was still largely reactive, concerned with countering accusations by the Western media. "The Soviet government 'ideologized' the event by attempting to link it to the Soviet proposals for arms reduction and to reinforce the image of the United States as the primary threat to disarmament" (p. 109).

Remington (1988) offered another perspective on the Soviet approach to covering social or environmental crises. In an analysis of the crisis management of the KAL Flight 007 and the Chernobyl incident, Remington examined the decision-making process whether to run these important stories or not. The author concluded that in dramatic situations, timeliness as the primary newsworthy factor concedes to political considerations by the high-levels of Soviet authority. Remington argued that the Chernobyl accident was unique because it tested Gorbachev's new *glasnost* policy, but even in the growing movement towards openness and objectivity, the coverage of the Chernobyl accident was not free of ideological control and propaganda effort—rather, the news stories had a specific angle and a stable approach to the theme, dictated by the Soviet leadership.

For many scholars, Chernobyl was a milestone in Soviet media studies. Marples and Young (1997) contended that "Chernobyl was first and foremost a media event" (p. 125). In their analysis, the authors acknowledged the sensitivity of the nuclear safety theme and compared the way in which the United States and the Soviets handled their own nuclear fiascoes. However, Marples and Young provided a rather limited and traditional perspective on the news coverage of the accidents, failing to analyze the importance of the complex political and international environment. "Whereas the Western media is and was free to write accounts of Three Mile Island at their leisure, the Soviet press has espoused the opinion of the leadership in Moscow, by and large" (p. 126). Thus, Marple and Young argued that the "free" and democratic press of the United States handled the sensitive topic of nuclear catastrophe in a more responsible and open fashion, while the Soviet press withheld and manipulated important information not only to their own citizens but to the international community as well.

In a similar argument, Haynes and Bojcun (1988) pointed out that the Western media were hampered in their work by the paucity of information—or the complete lack of it before 28 April—from the Soviet government, and by the prohibition against Moscow-based foreign correspondents traveling to Chernobyl to pursue their inquiries. "In what was clearly perceived by the Reagan administration as a propaganda opportunity against the Soviet Union, government officials joined the fray once the Soviet government admitted the disaster" (p. 62). Haynes and Bojcun also argued that while the initial sensationalism of the exaggerated reports of the number of victims and geographical scope of the accident were eventually corrected, they "received a good deal of play in the world press" and influenced the manner in which the nuclear accident was perceived by the international audience.

Luke (1989) contended that the news of Chernobyl fit well within the mechanism of "conditioning and suggestion" in both the Eastern and the Western world. While analyzing role ideology in the Soviet and the U.S. press, the author maintained that shifting the focus in covering such an important nuclear disaster from the event itself to the ideological perspective of the society in which it took place, summarized the intrinsic complexity of events with international significance the rank of Chernobyl. "When causation is assigned to the Chernobyl reactor operators or designers' technical blunders, the disaster can be attributed to inept magicians, who rightly paid the price of serious trouble for lacking 'technical vigilance'" (p. 183). Luke's critical analysis strongly emphasized the importance which the dominant ideology of a given society, whether the "free," democratic society of the West, or the tightly controlled society of the Soviet Union, had on the content and direction of news coverage.

To summarize, while there is a significant amount of literature written on failures of nuclear energy and their coverage by the U.S. and Soviet press, only a limited number of these studies explore the influence of political ideology on the content of news. Thus, it seemed necessary to examine the role of ideology and political rivalry in the press coverage of these two events, which while not political in nature, present an opportunity for political opposition and power struggle.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

According to the hegemony thesis, the news media are not autonomous institutions capable of exercising their own power; rather, the news media serve as instruments in the voluntary ideological mobilization of the society. To examine the applicability of the hegemony thesis to the press coverage of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, this comparative study addressed these research questions:

1. Was there a difference in the ideological perspective presented in the U.S. press coverage of Three Mile Island compared with the coverage of the Chernobyl accident? Was there a difference in the ideological perspective presented in the Soviet press coverage of Three Mile Island compared to the coverage of Chernobyl?
2. Was there a difference in the usage of sources in the U.S. and the Soviet press coverage of Chernobyl and Three Mile Island?
3. Did the language of the U.S. news coverage differ in reporting the two accidents and was the language used in the news reports ideological in nature?
4. Did the language of the Soviet news coverage differ in reporting the two accidents and was the language used in the news reports ideological in nature?

To examine these research questions, the following hypotheses were postulated based upon the literature review and the historical context of the Cold War:

H1: U.S. press coverage of Chernobyl will have a more negative ideological slant than the U.S. coverage of Three Mile Island and the Soviet press coverage of Three Mile Island will have a more negative ideological slant than the press coverage of Chernobyl.

H2: More official sources will be used in the U.S. press coverage of Three Mile Island than in the U.S. press coverage of Chernobyl and more official sources will be used in the Soviet coverage of Chernobyl than in the Soviet news coverage of Three Mile Island.

H3: More negatively charged ideological words will be used in the U.S. news coverage of the Chernobyl nuclear accident than in the news coverage of Three Mile Island and more positively charged ideological words will be used in the U.S. coverage of Three Mile Island than in the U.S. coverage of Chernobyl.

H4: More negatively charged ideological words will be used in the Soviet coverage of the Three Mile Island than in covering the Chernobyl accident and more positively charged ideological words will be used in the Soviet coverage of Chernobyl than in the Soviet coverage of Three Mile Island.

Method

From the large selection of newspapers with significant national circulation in the United States, two newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post,* were selected. The *New York Times,* journalism scholars contend, ends up influencing the content" of the media and the knowledge of the opinion leaders (Cohen, 1961; Davidson; 1976; Weiss, 1974; Saikowski, 1983; Graber, 1993) and that it may not be a bad indicator of the general public perception about news events (Page & Shapiro, 1984).[1] The *Washington Post*, as one of the influential newspapers which originates in the nation's capital, also enjoys great popularity as an opinion leader and an elite newspaper.

To study the news coverage of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl in the Soviet press, this study analyzes *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* as representatives of the Soviet press. These newspapers were selected because as Young and Launer (1991) argued, "the national press remains the medium of choice for placing events into the proper ideological prospective" (p. 108). *Pravda*, the official organ of the Communist Party, was published seven days a week and had a circulation of almost 11 million in the 1980s, the largest circulating newspaper in the world (Kurian, 1982; Hecht, 1982).[2]

This study also analyzes *Izvestiya,* published by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, to provide a more balanced representation of the Soviet press. *Izvestiya* had a 6.4 million circulation in the late 1980s and while not as authoritative as *Pravda* and rarely diverging from the official party line (Boxburgh, 1987), *Izvestiya* differed in appearance and on occasion, in content, from the official voice of the party (Murray, 1994).[3]

This study encompasses two separate time periods—the first two months after the Three Mile Island accident starting from March 28, 1979, and ending May 31, 1979, and two months after the Chernobyl accident, starting from April 26, 1986, and ending on June 30, 1986.

A preliminary examination of all newspaper issues from the study period yielded a total of 438 Three Mile Island stories in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and a total of 4 stories in *Pravda* and *Izvetiya*.[5] For Chernobyl, the total number of stories printed in the U.S. newspapers was 411 against 102 stories printed in the Soviet newspapers. Table 1 is the distribution of news items in the two U.S. and the two Soviet elite newspapers.

(Table 1 here)

This study uses a systematic sample of 25 % of the convenient sample of U.S. newspapers for the two nuclear accidents, a total of 211 stories. For the Soviet newspapers, the study considers the whole convenient sample of 106 stories. For the purposes of this study, all newspapers were examined in their native language—English for the U.S. dailies, and Russian for the Soviet dailies.

Overall, the paragraph was used as the coding unit and the unit of analysis for hypothesis one. Hypotheses three and four required that the word be the coding unit and the unit of analysis.

To find out whether there were any differences in the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl news coverage, the following variables were established:

Slant—ideological slant was measured by recording whether a paragraph conveyed a favorable and positive impression of the actions of the respective country, unfavorable or negative impression, or whether the paragraph conveyed both or neither, in which, it was considered neutral.

Ideological Words—ideological words were decided through a preliminary review of the U.S. and the Soviet coverage of the accident. Certain words, conveying ideological opposition were recorded and thereafter, coded by the research. For example, ideological words were accident vs. nuclear disaster;

damaged reactor vs. crippled reactor; immediate reactor vs. slow and untimely reaction, open communication vs. withholding information; mechanical failure vs. human error; among others. These ideological words were examined and recorded to establish the role of language in the reporting of international and national news in the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

Source—after a careful reading of randomly selected, non-sample issues of the examined newspapers, the following categories of sources were established: journalistic (journalist's observation or investigation); wire sources; official sources (governmental or other state institution); scientific (a study or an identified scientist); nuclear industry source (national or international); unofficial sources (any unnamed and dissidents' opinion) and other (any other sources).

Inter-coder reliability was established at 95% for ideological slant and 100% for ideological words.[6]

Findings and discussion

The statistical procedure yielded a total of 3,170 paragraphs, 2,248 (71%) of which were found in the U.S. press coverage of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl and 920 (29%) in the Soviet coverage of the two accidents. These initial results of the statistical distribution of stories in the U.S. and the Soviet press are in themselves illuminating. The volume of coverage in the U.S. press of both the Three Mile Island and the Chernobyl accidents was significantly higher than the volume of coverage of the same events in the Soviet newspapers under examination.

The first hypothesis was supported. The data yielded statistically significant results ($\chi^2=477.00$, $p < .05$) and demonstrated that the slant of the U.S. news stories about Chernobyl was more negative than the slant of the U.S. news stories about Three Mile Island. The slant of the Soviet news reports about TMI was also more negative than the slant of the Soviet news report of the Chernobyl accident. The results of the statistical test are presented in Table 2:

(Table 2 here)

The news coverage of Chernobyl in the two U.S. elite newspapers was more negative (38.8%) than the news coverage of Three Mile Island which was not reported in a negative ideological slant (0%).

In the two Soviet elite newspapers, the news coverage of Three Mile Island was also more negative (65%) than the Soviet news coverage of Chernobyl which was not reported in a negative ideological slant (0%). In testing hypothesis two, the statistical procedure yielded significant results (χ^2=110.473 $p < .05$), presented in Table 3.

(Table 3 here)

Contrary to the theoretical assumptions, however, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* cited almost an equal amount of official (49.5%) and non-official sources (50.5%). The news stories in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* used more official sources in covering Chernobyl (96.1%) than in covering Three Mile Island (3.9%). However, even though the results of the statistical test were significant and the findings indicated that the Soviet press used more official sources in the news coverage of Chernobyl than in the coverage of Three Mile Island, the U.S. press used an equal number of official sources in reporting both TMI and Chernobyl. Thus, hypothesis two is rejected.

For the purpose of testing hypothesis three, the following procedure was established. The negatively charged could also be labeled as "provocative" because used in the coverage of the opposing power's nuclear accident, they convey a critical and negative interpretation. Similarly, what earlier was described as positively charged ideological words could also be described as "defensive" words because when used in reporting one's own nuclear failure, they convey a more supportive and positive interpretation. The statistical test which was applied to the collected data in testing this hypothesis was conducted while collapsing the two sets of words into two separate categories which were labeled accordingly. The findings of the test yielded significant support (χ^2=103.1226, $p < .05$) and are described in Table 4:

(Table 4 here)

The news coverage of the Three Mile Island in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* 62.9% of the time used positively charged ideological words such as "accident," "mechanical failure," or "strong reactor design" and only 37.1% of the time employed negatively charged ideological words.

Moreover, the U.S. press coverage of Chernobyl 63.4% of the time used negatively charged ideological words such as "secretive," "nuclear disaster," "human error," or "unsafe nuclear science," while only 36.6% employed positively charged ideological words. These results clearly lend support to hypothesis three.

The recording procedure applied to the data set in testing hypothesis three which collapsed the total number of ideologically words into two separate varibles was also used to test this hypothesis four. The test yielded significant results (χ^2=46.01313, $p < .05$) which are presented in Table 5.

(Table 5 here)

The Soviet press coverage of Three Mile Island employed in 68.4% of the time words with ideological meaning which were critical of American nuclear science and the U.S. handling of the nuclear accident, such as "unprepared to handle nuclear accidents," "nuclear disaster," or "incompetent operators," and "slow and untimely reaction" and which were defined as "negatively charged ideological words." On the other hand, only 31.6% of the time the Soviet newspapers used words were carried a positive ideological meaning. Also, the Soviet newspaper reports of Chernobyl 87% of the time used positively charged ideological words such as "safe nuclear science," "immediate evacuation and mobilization," or "strong design" and "sophisticated control while only 13% employed words and terms that a had a negative ideological meaning. Therefore, hypothesis four is supported.

Qualitative analysis

The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*

The news coverage of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl in the U.S. press significantly differed in areas of concentration and themes of interest. The similar nature of the two technological mishaps suggested a consistent tone and focus of news stories over the two time periods. However, the U.S. press exhibited notably different behavior in the case of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl. While Three Mile Island was a unique technological disaster, unprecedented in coverage and importance, Chernobyl presented an opportunity for the U.S. journalists to improve their knowledge and skills in handling risk communication which threatened public safety on a national and international level. During the Three

Mile Island crisis, the U.S. newspapers directed the public attention to the potential hazards of civil nuclear power and the assumed consequences of nuclear fallout. Moreover, the news media's reaction to and handling of the Three Mile Island nuclear failure in itself became a newsworthy event, which received a significant play in the press. While the volume of material printed about the accident was almost prodigious, reporters often admitted their fear of the consequences of radiation exposure and their failure to understand the workings of a nuclear reactor and thus, their failure to communicate effectively the risk of a possible fallout at TMI. As a *Washington Post* article pointed out, "reporters in many cases ended up interviewing each other" and thus, produced great volumes of information that in many cases was not carefully researched or scrutinized.

Along with stories that focused exclusively on the information provided by the governmental commission in charge of investigating the accident, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* printed stories on anti-nuclear protests and risk assessment that often questioned the safety of U.S. nuclear technology. A *New York Times* story, for example, discussed the dangerous consequences of a possible meltdown at TMI, warning the public of the dangers of civil nuclear technology. Similar in tone articles questioned the necessity of using energy produced by atomic power plants, turning the attention of the public to alternative energy sources.

Moreover, U.S. newspapers devoted a significant part of their news coverage to discussing international reaction to the manner in which the Three Mile Island accident was handled by the government and the nuclear technology authorities. While many of these reports were positive and, for the most part, supportive of the safety measures developed as a universal standard in the Western world, the news reports which discussed the Soviet coverage of Three Mile Island were exclusively critical. An article printed on April 2, 1979, in the *New York Times* discussing the Soviet reaction to the accident accused Soviet authorities of misrepresenting facts and exaggerating the consequences of the nuclear failure. Moreover, the *Times* report pointed out that all Soviet accusations of incompetence were groundless, particularly when only one Soviet reactor had the safety concrete containment dome which all nuclear power plants in the United States had. The *Times* report also emphasized a statement by a Soviet dissident scientist who testified to a Soviet nuclear explosion which released dangerous nuclear wastes but was never reported or confirmed by Soviet authorities. The effect was to question the safety standards and procedures of Soviet nuclear science and raise further doubt in the safety of Soviet nuclear science and technology in general.

On the other hand, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* applied a different approach to the coverage of the Chernobyl nuclear accident. The initial reports on Chernobyl in the U.S. newspapers concentrated heavily on the lack of information and Soviet unwillingness to cooperate and release the facts around the circumstances and the scope of the nuclear accident. One explanation of this different perspective was offered by Sood, Stockdale and Rogers (1987) who contended that while the Three Mile Island disaster increased the news value of Chernobyl, the Cold War relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union also played a significant role in the perspective through which the news media depicted the failure of the Soviet nuclear power. Overall, the U.S. press expressed the mistrust and negative attitude of the West to the general safety and reliability of Soviet nuclear science. Moreover, a majority of early news reports questioned the strength of the Soviet industrial base and sought to expose the weaknesses of the Soviet system in general. In the news reports, the Chernobyl reactor was often described as "crippled," "lacking basic safety regulations," "an enormous explosion," "having the worst safety measures in the world." Journalists openly spoke of "the shadow of Chernobyl," "the slow reaction and heavy bureaucratic machine" of the Soviet government. In the same tone, the secrecy of the Soviet government occupied the attention of reporters, who wrote that the Soviets were putting "an extraordinary effort to restrict information about the worst nuclear accident so far" and that this was apparently "a reflexive retreat into secrecy that again seemed to show the Kremlin loath to concede any failing before its people and a hostile world."

Other news reports attempted to estimate the importance of this nuclear disaster and its implication to the future development of U.S. nuclear science. An article in the *Washington Post* cited an U.S. scientist who announced that "Hiroshima was a major lab for studying radiation, and now, this will be another one." An even more insensitive comment was quoted in a *New York Times* cover page news story which stated: "It's too bad it did not happen closer to Kremlin."

While the majority of initial reports of Chernobyl in the U.S. newspapers concentrated on the Soviet delay of information of the nuclear fallout to the international community, many of the follow-up reports focused on the comparison between the safety of the two powers' nuclear technologies, which often metamorphosed into a open discussion of the difference between the two political and social systems. Many of these stories often discussed the Three Mile Island accident, emphasizing the safety of the American reactors in comparison to those of the Soviets. One official was quoted in a *Washington Post* news story stating that "the difference between TMI and Chernobyl is like the difference between heaven and hell." A nuclear scientist declared that "while the U.S. authorities were extremely cautious in handling the nuclear incident at TMI, the Soviet authorities displayed reckless disregard for safety."

Pravda and *Izvetiya*

A striking observation was made at the beginning of the data collection stage when the search located only four stories in *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* discussing the Three Mile Island accident in its immediate aftermath. An examination of the study period indicated that most of the international news coverage was devoted to foreign policy conflicts and Cold War power struggle, mainly reviewing the Arab-Israeli conflict and the "aggressive" American involvement in it. In fact, both Soviet newspapers devoted only two of the six total pages in each daily issue to international news, one page of which was solely devoted to news from the "brotherly peoples" of the Socialist republic in the Eastern bloc. However, despite the small number of stories, the ideological inclination of the Soviet reports was hard to overlook. The news stories in both newspapers spoke of "panic-stricken people" and an "unexpected and uncontrollable situation." Perhaps the best description of the Soviet reaction to Three Mile Island was an extensive news analysis of the event published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. What the U.S. was initially portraying as an incident was interpreted in the Soviet bloc as "a serious, major accident, one that threatened at any moment to turn into a catastrophe, even terrible tragedy." Moreover, the news report said that the only explanation of the accident could be "either that the personnel were not adequately trained or that the emergencies technology demands further attention." The author of the article drew attention to the irresponsible behavior of the private nuclear energy companies. "For the public, Three Mile Island serves—no, it already served—as an example of the criminally irresponsible use of the atomic energy by monopolies, and people indignant about what happened." Interestingly, the Soviet reports of TMI also mentioned the lack of reliable safety system in American nuclear plants, which contrary to the U.S. reports, were described as weak and unreliable, and most of all, "malfunctioning and cheap."

Moreover, in the same edition of the newspaper, another article took the opportunity to emphasize the superiority of the Soviet nuclear technology. The article, titled "No Task Is Beyond Soviet Science" criticized the U.S. for experimenting with nuclear science and technological advance in the name of private profit, rather than in the name of the progress of humanity. On the other hand, "the USSR's mighty scientific and technical potential," the article contended, allows it to solve problems that withstand various sorts of tests and blockades.

The discussion of Three Mile Island, as well as of many other minor nuclear mishaps in the Western world, found place on the pages of *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* almost immediately after the worst nuclear failure so far took place in April 1986. While ideological opposition and anti-American sentiments found a reflection in the news coverage of TMI, Chernobyl presented yet another opportunity to the Soviet press to apply ideological control to the content of domestic and international news.

Perhaps the most striking element of the Soviet news coverage of Chernobyl was the four-day delay in releasing information to the international community, and most of all, to the Soviet people directly affected by the scope of the accident. However, the Soviet authority presented an explanation which was to excuse the lack of early reports—in order to avoid panic and assess the short- and the long-term plans of action for fast recovery from the accident, the Soviet authorities needed four days to thoroughly research and examine the situation at Chernobyl and its consequences to the people of the Soviet Union and the international community. Interestingly, what was perceived as a token of bad faith and reckless secretiveness in the Western world was described as a necessary measure of selective approach to information in the interest of the Soviet people and the fast and effective elimination of the radiation threat.

Moreover, the areas of concentration and the focus of news stories in the Soviet press differed significantly from the coverage of Chernobyl in the U.S. press. While the number of stories printed in the Soviet newspapers did not match the volume of coverage which the accident received in the U.S. press, the news stories discussing the Chernobyl tragedy in the Soviet newspapers were mostly feature or human interest stories which occupied the front pages of the newspapers and enjoyed significant length. Contrary to the U.S. press coverage of the Chernobyl accident, instead of approaching the nuclear mishap as a major technological disaster which presented an excellent opportunity to test the safety and the reliability of the nuclear system of a competing world power, the Soviet news coverage was directed in a more humane and spirited perspective. The majority of the early stories and in fact, most of the follow-up reports, focused on the brave effort of all plant operators and emergency workers who helped in the immediate evacuation and mobilization of the local populations. However, none of the articles failed to mention the skilled and considerate leadership of the Communist Party, which was often called "the great and wise leader," "true friend of the victims," "protector of the survivors." Moreover, rather than depicting a portrait of a weak industrial base and incompetent emergency force, *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* openly praised the highly qualified team of emergency workers on the site, who "performed enormous human feats" and the medical team who was "doing the impossible to safe the life of the brave Chernobyl firefighters."

A great amount of attention in the Soviet newspapers was also given to other nuclear accidents which took place around the world, particularly, failures of nuclear technology in the Western hemisphere. Most of these articles criticized the "apparent lack of responsibility on the side of private interests" and while clearly ideological in their anti-Western sentiments, presented ideologically charged, yet true, facts of nuclear mishaps all over the Western world. Of particular interest to the Soviet journalists were the technological failures in all spheres of U.S. science. A significant amount of coverage, for example, was given to the "Challenger" catastrophe and to investigating the reasons for the accident. Several articles in *Pravda* and *Izvetyia* described the "cruel and "heartless" decision of the NASA authorities to allow the flight to take place regardless of their knowledge of failing safety systems in the space shuttle. NASA was described as "willingly and consciously closing its eyes on blatant technological defects," as "opportunistic," and "recklessly adventurous" and the astronauts were said to be "doomed" at the "mercy of irresponsible administration."

Many of the journalistic reports also discussed the Western reaction to Chernobyl and the Western depiction of the accident in the news media. To the Soviet journalist, the purpose of these reports was beyond clear—"with these images, the capitalists are hoping to divert the attention from the numerous nuclear accidents that take place on American soil, the reasons for which are either defective equipment, insufficient qualification of the personnel or reckless disregard for safety measures," one reporter wrote. Others described the Western media coverage as "desperate attempt to divert the attention from the criminal aggression of the U.S. expressed in the recent bombing of Libya, and the undeclared war against Afghanistan and Nicaragua; to justify future effort in the weapons race, the continuing nuclear tests and the refusal to accept the peace proposals of the Soviet Union."

The accusations of the Soviet press were almost universally present in each news report, emphasizing the lack of understanding and compassion from the West to the terrible tragedy of the Chernobyl people. Moreover, the critical U.S. media coverage of Chernobyl was also used as a political sign of unwillingness to negotiate the nuclear disarmament—a note heavily played in the Soviet coverage of the Chernobyl disaster. In this connection, it is important to note that many journalistic reports shifted the focus from the scene of the accident to painting apocalyptic images of what might happen in case of a nuclear war with the United States. "The world, humanity in general should never forget what a terrible danger lies in nuclear arms," a press release in *Pravda* stated. Thus, instead of questioning the governmental policies or expertise in handling nuclear technology and the lack of immediate and sufficient information about the danger of nuclear energy and nuclear science in general, the Soviet press depicted the Chernobyl disaster as a "test to the human strength and spirit," as an unavoidable "glitch in the wheel of progress" and a chance for the Soviet people to prove to the world that theirs is a just, closely knit society which always strives to help comrades in distress, nuclear or civil.

Limitations

This study had several limitations among which the most apparent one was the small sample size of Soviet news stories on the Three Mile Island nuclear failure. The small sample size poses questions about the validity of the test results and request further examination to determine the strength of the statistical conclusions.

While this study focused on the influence of ideology on the news coverage in the United Sates and the Soviet Union, other influential factors that determine the direction of news reports also come to mind. For instance, the role of journalistic norms and journalism education both in the United States and the Soviet Union could be a decisive factor in directing the news coverage of domestic and international events and could contribute valuable findings to future research of the news coverage of nuclear accidents in the different press systems. Moreover, this study could offer another perspective to the study of journalistic practices in the East and the West, particularly in the case of the concept of objectivity and role of ideology in the news.

Finally, the research method in this study was content analysis which in itself presents another limitation to the analysis of the findings because causal relationships between variables cannot be inferred. While certain trends in the news coverage of the two nuclear accidents ascertained the presence of ideological bias, the content analysis failed to consider the role of the news media in influencing the public's judgment of the risk involved in more complex technological hazards. Disasters typically foster change and prompt new public behaviors and thus, are well suited for the study of media effects. Even more, the journalists' response to the accidents and their personal opinion and recollections of the news coverage could be surveyed in the future to determine the extent to which journalistic norms and personal beliefs influence the reporter's final news product.

Contributions and Implications of the Study

The purpose of this study was to illuminate the role of political ideology and the Cold War confrontation in the news coverage of two nuclear events which while sharing many common characteristics, significantly differed in the manner in which they were presented in the news media. While a significant amount of studies in mass communication have examined the news coverage of nuclear danger, and specifically the news media reaction to Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, none of those studies compared the two from an ideological perspective as reflected in the news reports. Thus, one of the contributions of this study is that is has enriched the existing literature with a unique comparative study which examined the role of ideology in the U.S. and the Soviet press coverage of TMI and Chernobyl.

Moreover, the study was also instrumental in testing the theory of hegemony and its applicability to mass communication research. The results of this study indicated that three posited hypotheses were supported which lend a significant provision to the hegemony thesis. Overall, the hegemonic role of the news media was established by the quantitative examination of the collected data in both the U.S. and the Soviet press alike. Undoubtedly, the results of this study confirmed that the ideological confrontation between the two world powers in the Cold War years swayed the news coverage of TMI and Chernobyl to present two universal ecological hazards as an opportunity to attack and criticize the beliefs and technological prowess of an opposing political regime rather than truthfully inform the public about the immediate and real dangers of radiation releases.

Moreover, the qualitative examination of the news coverage in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Pravda* and *Izvestiya* illuminated yet another difference in the way in which the two countries approached the news coverage of their nuclear accidents. The U.S. press bombarded the public with news reports, frequently exaggerated and contradictory, and devoted significant attention to the future of nuclear energy and its consequence to the U.S. energy corporations. On the other hand, the Soviet press coverage was almost exclusively devoted to the fate of the victims of the radiation fallout. In the Soviet press, Chernobyl was depicted as a test to the Soviet people, another cruel manifestation of the forces of nature, which despite its tragic end, presents yet another opportunity for the Soviet people to mobilize their assets and prove to the whole world that Soviet science will continue to progress with more sophisticated control and more safety measures. As a result of this, hundreds of letters were published in the Soviet newspapers, describing the Soviet people's selfless desire to help the victims of Chernobyl. An article in Pravda, entitled, "I want to work at the Station," quoted a member of the Chernobyl community who addressed these words to the Western press: "Screaming from the grave, we are alive! We stand firm on our land. We are going to fight for a clear sky above us to the very last breath. We are the brave people of Chernobyl."

Thus, while ideology was a decisive factor in determining the angle of news coverage in both the Soviet and the U.S. newspapers, it is important to note that there were also significant differences in the topics of interest and themes of coverage in the two press systems. The U.S. newspapers described the Chernobyl accident in a more negative light, emphasizing the lack of safety measures and sophisticated control while the Soviet newspapers presented the Chernobyl accident as nature's "test" to the strength of the Soviet people. This observation leads to yet another important finding of this study—while ideology seems to impact the direction and bias of news coverage, other factors, such as journalistic norms and personal values, might also influence the final news product. Moreover, while this study had certain limitations, it pointed out to a prominent role played by the dominant ideology and the superpower competition in the coverage of domestic and international news during the Cold War years. In the context of newswork, the dominant, anti-Communist or anti-Western ideology of either the United States or the Soviet Union appeared to function as a major source of news bias which also served as a powerful mechanism for transmitting and perpetuating the Cold War power competition and ideological opposition between the two countries. Ultimately, even nuclear hazards such as Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, which posed a serious threat not only to the country in which the nuclear failure took place but also to the entire international community, became not just a nuclear threat, but a political and ideological one as well.

Table 1

Distribution of News Stories in the Two U.S. and Soviet Newspapers

Newspaper	Three Mile Island Number of stories N	 Percent %	Chernobyl Number of stories N	 Percent %
The *New York Times*	297	67.2%	287	55.9%
The *Washington Post*	141	31.9%	124	24.2%
Pravda	3	.67%	48	9.4%
Izvestyia	1	.23%	54	10.5%
Total	442	100%	513	100%

Table 2

Distribution of Paragraph Use of Negative Ideological Slant by Newspaper and Accident

Nuclear accident	Negative mentions in the U.S. newspapers		Negative mentions in the Soviet newspapers	
	N	% of total slant	N	% of total slant
Three Mile Island	0	0%	13	65%
Chernobyl	464	38.8%	0	0%

χ^2=477.00 p=.00000 (p< .05)

Table 3

Distribution of Paragraph Use of Official Sources by Newspapers and Accident

Event	Usage of official sources in U.S. newspapers		Usage of official sources in Soviet newspapers	
	N	%	N	%
Three Mile Island	379	49.5%	6	3.9%
Chernobyl	386	50.5%	149	96.1%

χ^2=110.473 p= .00000 (p< .05)

Table 4

Distribution of Ideological Words in the U.S. Press Coverage of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl

Event	Usage of Negatively Charged Ideological Words		Usage of Positively Charged Ideological Words	
	N	%	N	%
Three Mile Island	248	37.1%	420	62.9%
Chernobyl	538	63.4%	311	36.6%

χ^2=103.1226 p= .00000 (p< .05)

Table 5

Distribution of Ideological Words in the Soviet Press Coverage of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl

Event	Usage of Negatively Charged Ideological Words		Usage of Positively Charged Ideological Words	
	N	%	N	%
Three Mile Island	13	68.4%	6	31.6%
Chernobyl	90	13.0%	604	87.0%

χ^2=46.01313 p= .00000 (p< .05)

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THE USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL AS A NEWSGATHERING RESOURCE

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THE USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL AS A NEWSGATHERING RESOURCE

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses reporters' and editors' uses of electronic mail in U.S. daily newspaper newsrooms. The study was based on a national mail survey of reporters and editors at randomly selected daily newspapers in fall 2001. Respondents described the levels and types of use of electronic mail on the job and their concerns about electronic mail. The study found a growing role for electronic mail, but concerns about how and under what circumstances it may be used successfully in gathering information for news stories. The study found differences in use among newsroom staff members according to their positions and some significant differences in use by men and women or by younger and older journalists. Editors, more so than reporters, were suspicious of unsolicited electronic mail and they more often expressed concern about its credibility and quality more than reporters.

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THE USE OF ELECTRONIC MAIL AS A NEWSGATHERING RESOURCE

Electronic mail is thirty years old this spring and the personal computer just celebrated its twentieth birthday last fall.[1] While it came into widespread use with the rise of the World Wide Web within the past decade, electronic mail has become an indispensable computer network resource for most corporations, small businesses, and other organizations worldwide.[2] In the network-based business world, electronic mail has become a dominant communication resource, even more popular than the Web or the most-popular office suite applications.[3] It has been described as one of the "most widespread" and "most useful" application protocols on the Internet.[4] Daily use volume worldwide was into the billions and the number of users had grown to nearly 600 million by 2000. In late 2000, there were estimates of about 119 million electronic mail boxes in the United States alone.[5]

A recent study by Gartner, Inc., a technology research and advisory firm, reported that corporate workers spend forty-nine minutes of each workday dealing with electronic mail, but that only one in four messages requires immediate attention. Furthermore, Gartner reported 34% of electronic mail users check mail continuously, 42% check electronic mail while vacationing, and 23% check business e-mail on weekends.[6] Technology "enthusiasts" may be the heaviest users of electronic mail. MediaMark Research's recent consumer study of computer users found the heavy computer user was also a heavy electronic mail user.[7]

Despite the growth and popularity of electronic mail, little is known about its role in the news business, especially as a device for information gathering. Journalists receive press releases and conduct interviews using electronic mail. They communicate with colleagues and even with competitors. This study attempts to explore the uses and concerns of journalists involving electronic mail. Furthermore, it will examine whether there are differences in uses and concerns among newsrooms groups.

ELECTRONIC MAIL USE ISSUES

Electronic mail has emerged as a replacement for some communication functions in the public and private sectors. For many users, it has supplanted the telephone, especially for calls that require long-distance and international tolls.[8] Proponents and heavy users claim it is convenient, it shrinks distances required to communicate, and can be edited and changed before transmitted. Furthermore, users note it does not require the recipient party to be available at the time it is sent, it is efficient because it saves time and money in the transfer of information such as text and attached graphics, formatted documents, software, and multimedia content, and it has encouraged some people who would have not been writers or correspondents to communicate in written form because of its informal nature.[9] The ability to create recipient groups and forward messages are also seen as an advantage of its use.[10]

Despite its widespread growth in the past decade, electronic mail has detractors.[11] Much dislike for it stems from uses that go beyond its original design intentions.[12] Originally devised for communication, electronic mail is frequently used for other functions that have led to what Whittaker and Sidner called "email overload," which leads to personal information management problems.[13] McGuire, Stilborne, McAdams, and Hyatt described management of electronic mail as a primary concern for all users. They call electronic mail overload a second user phase that follows the initial novelty of networked messaging.[14]

Electronic mail is vulnerable to disabled networks, heavy traffic on working networks, and numerous software problems.[15] Critics have complained about how electronic mail wastes time required to read unwanted messages, has contributed to deterioration of written communication skills and habits, has led to damaged computer systems through spread of viruses, has led to general impatience among users seeking instant responses, and has required individuals to work when not in the office.[16] Users are increasingly concerned about message privacy, including journalists.[17] Other observers have noted that it has changed little in the process of communication because two parties are still required and an address must be known.[18]

ADOPTION AND USE BY JOURNALISTS

Like most businesses, newspapers and other news organizations began to find applications of electronic mail as the tool began to appear in production systems for internal messaging and, later, as part of dedicated and proprietary computer networks. When online services began to appear in the 1980s and 1990s, its use grew beyond the newsroom. Its growth and adoption surged with development of the Web in the early 1990s and its use expanded for both internal and external communication by journalists.

The adoption of electronic mail in newsrooms appears to follow Rogers' classic diffusion model for new technologies.[19] Maier found more than half the newspapers represented in his study of computer-assisted reporting newsroom trainers used electronic mail in 1999, the second-largest use of computer-based newsgathering resources. Only in-house archives were used by a larger proportion of newspapers. He also found that lack of time and technical skills, low levels of management support, and the absence of training were the primary causes for not using computers.[20] Lüge found that German journalists spent a mean of forty-six minutes a day reading, responding, filing, and deleting electronic mail in 1999. He also found those journalists wrote about five electronic mail messages per day and received about twenty per day.[21] Almost two-thirds of respondents in a national survey of U.S. television newsrooms used electronic mail in late 1997.[22]

Most news media authorities agree that electronic mail is an effective way for public relations professionals to communicate with clients and on behalf of clients in contacting journalists. College and university public relations programs teach students numerous personal computing skills today, including use of electronic mail.[23] Public relations firms have also begun to monitor public opinion and journalists' professional concerns views by subscribing to distribution or discussion lists—those electronic bulletin boards devoted to specific subjects that automatically distribute written messages to subscribers.[24] Firms are also using newsgroups, which are similar to distribution lists in that they "serve as a network place for people to gather around predefined topics."[25] Chat rooms are also becoming valuable in a similar manner.[26] Journalists and public relations practitioners use these tools to monitor public opinion about current events and issues, exchange information and views about on-going and breaking news stories with other journalists, and to identify potential sources, among other purposes.[27]

In the past decade, electronic mail has been used for distribution of press releases, texts of speeches, story idea tipsheets, announcements, graphics such as logos and photographs, and press conference notifications by corporations and by governments. One advantage often noted is that it is easier to target specific recipients with electronic mail and, of course, convenient for distribution to lists of journalists.[28] Journalists have responded to contact by public relations representatives with mixed feelings, noting that it is both a benefit and a nuisance.[29]

Electronic mail has become the most important tool of the Internet for journalists, Reavy has argued. He observed that journalists are learning to take advantage of its speed, low cost, convenience, flexibility, power, and security, despite the equipment and computer literacy requirements, occasional language complications, and accessibility problems. Reavy also observed that journalists use electronic mail to locate hard-to-find sources and to time-shift or reschedule interviews.[30] Electronic mail has, in effect, replaced fax machines in transfer of information to journalists. It is faster, more reliable, personalized, and does not require paper.[31] It is often the computer application that introduces journalists to the online world.[32] Journalists have observed that it can be used to answer routine questions and fact checking in an efficient manner. It may often be the only method available to contact sources in remote locations or sources in distant time zones. Reluctant sources find the mask of electronic mail a benefit and reporters have found that difficult-to-reach sources are often more accessible through electronic mail. It is becoming more and more critical for international reporting and research. In some situations, of course, finding an electronic mail address may not be easy.[33]

Some journalists find electronic mail's ability to contact multiple sources with a single message advantageous. Journalists have been found to monitor distribution lists on their beats, also. Electronic mail also permits easy follow-ups after stories have been published.[34]

Another function of electronic mail that journalists find useful is internal or office communication. Reporters have been found to frequently communicate with editors and colleagues through electronic mail, even if these individuals are in the same building. The tool is even more helpful when multiple offices, such as remote news bureaus, are involved.[35] Newsroom librarians and news researchers use electronic mail extensively, often in the same ways as reporters— to chase down information, confirm facts, monitor distribution lists and discussion groups, exchange information with other news researchers, and subscribe to news alert services.[36]

Newspapers and other news organizations use electronic mail to create an interactive level of communication with audiences and they often value reader feedback on stories and submissions to letters to the editor.[37] Some news organizations also offer server space for electronic mail accounts. It is common to find electronic mail addresses of reporters or editors printed with news stories in print and online editions of newspapers. While this often leads to useless messages, it can lead to valuable story tips and ideas. Callahan noted that reader feedback has its limitations, however, because not all readers have access to electronic mail and that unsolicited comments are often extreme.[38]

Concerns that journalists have traditionally expressed about sources, such as verification of identification and general credibility matters, are often found in electronic mail and other network communication.[39] One characteristic of electronic mail, anonymity of location and role of the sender and even whether the name of the sender is actually the individual sending the message can be problematic. Similarly, the absence of social context clues is often troubling to professionals who must evaluate the quality of the information provided before it is used. These matters often lead to forgery problems.[40]

Buckley conducted a comprehensive study of electronic mail use by editors in newspaper newsrooms. Reviewing responses from the one hundred largest dailies across five departments in the newsroom, she determined contact with sources to be the leading use. She also found that editors preferred to use electronic mail to communicate with public relations representatives and to receive press releases as well as to communicate with free-lance writers and readers. However, she also found lack of support for its use for inter-office communication. Editors received twice the volume of messages (24 business messages and 5 personal) than they sent out (12 business and 2.5 personal) each day. Editors were concerned about recipients not receiving messages or, despite the speed of electronic mail, whether messages would be read in a timely manner.[41]

Trumbo and his colleagues studied electronic mail use by science journalists in 1994 and 1999, reporting a dramatic increase from 18% to 80%. Volume has also increased from eight messages to thirty messages per day. Task functions of electronic mail, they noted, has grown at a faster rate than social functions. These specialized journalists were enthusiastic about the Internet and its potential, in part, because of "a positive orientation toward the quality of Web information, trust in the sources behind Web information, and individual characteristics of innovativeness."[42]

Williams found electronic mail was "effective" in newsgathering among broadcast journalists.[43] Her study revealed that the broadcasters felt electronic mail provided access to information and sources that were previously unavailable or difficult to reach. Study respondents expressed concern about accuracy of the information, however.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Despite the growing body of literature about electronic mail, only a limited number of empirical studies have viewed electronic mail as a news reporting resource. Research has not provided much insight into journalists' perceptions of electronic mail's credibility. If journalists do not see the resource as credible, its use will undoubtedly diminish. If it is valued and seen as credible, its use may continue to increase and its importance as a reporting resource will grow. Therefore, these five research questions were posed:

1. *What are the general electronic mail use levels in newspaper newsrooms?*
2. *What are the primary purposes, goals, and volume levels of its use?*
3. *What are journalists' most significant concerns about the use of electronic mail for gathering information in newspaper newsrooms?*
4. *What is the amount of use of electronic mail in the interview process?*
5. *Are there differences in use of electronic mail according to gender, age, role in the newsroom, or level of computer expertise?*

STUDY METHODS

A national mail survey of newspaper journalists was conducted in fall 2001 to determine answers to the four general research questions. The study employed a six-page self-administered questionnaire containing both closed-ended and open-ended questions about access, usage types, usage volume, and concerns about certain problems identified in the literature.

In addition to typical demographic items, the instrument contained a series of questions determined to measure basic types and levels of use. One scale of items was a sixteen-item "worry" scale, which sought to measure journalists' concerns about the use of electronic mail. It reflected the most common issues and problems. Items included credibility, factual reliability, and technical matters. Respondents replied to the statements on a one-to-five scale where one represented the minimum "do not worry about it at all" position and five represented the maximum "worry about it a lot" position. Three represented the mid-point. Respondents were selected randomly using a multi-stage sample design. From a comprehensive list of nearly 1,600 daily newspapers in the United States in 2001, 500 newspapers were selected using standard interval sampling. To determine specific respondents contacted at each newspaper in the sample, the Web site of each newspaper was visited. The name of a reporter or editor was randomly selected from news coverage on one business day in September 2001. Cover letters, questionnaires, and stamped, self-addressed return envelopes were sent directly to these respondents in early October 2001. A second mailing, to enhance response rate, was sent in early November 2001.

FINDINGS

A total of 201 journalists returned usable questionnaires, a response rate of 40.2%.

What are the general electronic mail use levels in newspaper newsrooms? What are the primary purposes, goals, and volume levels of its use?

Respondents were demographically diverse. They represented a wide range of newspapers, from very small to very large, as shown in Table 1. Most respondents were either beat or general assignment reporters, but other newsroom roles included editors and other news managers. Some respondents, especially those at small dailies, held multiple roles. The sample was slightly more male (57.0%) than female, had worked slightly more than a decade (11.69 years, SD = 9.73) as journalists, was in the mid 30s (36.58 years, SD = 11.81), and viewed itself mostly as an intermediate computer user (66.5%). More than nine in ten respondents (91.5%) have an electronic mail account and address provided by their newspapers. More than half have broadband or high-speed access (40.6% T-1 or faster, 17.6% DSL, and 6.7% cable modem).

Uses of electronic mail were varied, as shown in Table 2. The most common use of electronic mail was to contact sources. More than three-quarters of respondents reported using electronic mail to exchange information with sources for stories. Various types of communication with colleagues were reported by six in ten respondents. Less frequent uses included communicating with superiors, subscribing to distribution lists, sending stories or other news content to the newsroom, and contact with discussion or news groups. A total of 35.8% reported subscribing to one or more electronic mail distribution lists, although the nature of these lists varies considerably from issue-based themes to source-based categories. The most commonly used lists included special interests groups and issues such as drugs and medicine, gambling, news organizations and news providers, police and other law enforcement groups, and state government lists. Only 23.4% of respondents reported posting messages to a distribution list, however.

Journalists use a special form of the distribution list, the government agency or other organization-based "alert" list. A total of 39.4% report using one or more alert lists. As with distribution lists, special interests, news organizations, and state government alert services dominate those used by these respondents. In addition to these three categories, U.S. Census alerts were also popular among those responding to the open-ended question.

Because electronic mail can be accessed from different locations in most electronic mail systems, journalists used it outside the newsroom for both business and personal purposes. In addition to newsroom access above 90%, access at home is high. A total of 75.3% reported accessing electronic mail from home. Of that, 34.2% read business and office electronic mail from home. In fact, study respondents reported that 78.3% of all electronic mail read at home is business-related while only 14.5% said the balance was about even and 7.2% said it was mostly personal in nature.

Journalists received three times the number of business-related electronic mail messages each day than they sent, according to data in Table 3. Respondents reported a mean of 15.71 business messages (SD = 26.08) per day while sending only about five per day. Personal use of electronic mail was lower. Journalists reported receiving about eight personal messages per day while sending about three and one-half per day. Journalists subscribing to distribution lists used several (mean = 3.79, SD = 2.73). While they use government-based "alert" distribution lists less often (mean = 2.60, SD = 1.98), they remain common.

What are journalists' most significant concerns about the use of electronic mail for gathering information in newspaper newsrooms?

While electronic mail applications in the newsroom are broad-based, journalists expressed a number of concerns reported in Table 4. Using the five-point scale of sixteen statements where five represented "worry about it a lot" and 1 represented "do not worry about it at all," journalists demonstrated the greatest concern about junk electronic mail (X=3.03, SD = 1.40) and viruses transmitted by electronic mail that could result in lost data (X = 2.99, SD = 1.36) or damage to their newsroom's computer system (X = 2.98, SD = 1.40). Respondents appeared less concerned about expressing their personal opinions on distribution lists or news groups (X = 2.50, SD = 1.41), that electronic mail will be read by someone other than the person intended (X = 2.47, SD = 1.29), that messages sent will not be received (X = 2.44, SD = 1.08), that important mail may be lost (X = 2.42, SD = 1.22), and that someone else will read mail (X = 2.40, SD = 1.26). Respondents seemed least concerned about someone else using their electronic mail address, that direct quotations taken from a message may somehow be quoted out of context, that someone interviewed using electronic mail will not be the person he or she is supposed to be and that facts obtained cannot be confirmed. The view that electronic mail interviews do not provide credible information, that information sent should not be used because the source may have thought it was not for publication, that he or she will inadvertently send a message to the wrong person, and that a message will be forwarded to people that were not intended to see it were also listed.

What is the amount of use of electronic mail in the interview process?

Electronic mail has a small role as a tool for journalistic interviewing, as shown in Table 5. While the vast majority of interviews by respondents were conducted by telephone (51.3%) or in person (41.7%), respondents reported a mean of 6.5% of interviews conducted using electronic mail. Another 4.6% were conducted by "other" means. Most respondents using electronic mail for interviews used it infrequently. Only one-quarter of those using it for interviews reported proportions of all interviews greater than 10% of the time. These journalists who have begun to use electronic mail for interviews view it positively. A total of 72.3% labeled their experiences "successful" and another 16.1% said it was "very successful." Of those responding to the question, only 11.6% felt it was either "unsuccessful" or "very unsuccessful."

Journalists using electronic mail often find it helpful in contacting groups, organizations, and public officials about policy issues when reporting. Of those responding, 81.4% had used electronic mail for this purpose. Almost all journalists who have used electronic mail in this manner viewed it successful (61.1%) or very successful (23.9%). Only 15.1% viewed it as a negative experience.

Are there differences in use of electronic mail according to gender, age, role in the newsroom, or level of computer expertise?

For the most part, male and female journalists *do not* differ significantly in their concerns about the newsgathering and other pitfalls of electronic mail. However, as shown in Table 6, women (2.73) are more concerned about someone reading their electronic mail on their computers than men (2.10). This was the only item with a statistically significant difference.

There are also *very few* age differences, as shown in Table 7. Younger respondents (2.51), defined as those in the lower half of the respondent group, were more concerned than older respondents (2.04) that a message may inadvertently be sent to the wrong person.

However, there were more statistically significant differences in the concerns about electronic mail expressed by the main categories of role players in the newsroom. As shown in Table 8, role differences were significant for almost half the statements in the scale. Editors, supervisors, and other newsroom managers are more worried than their reporters about taking quotations from electronic mail out of context. Editors are also more concerned about the credibility of electronic mail content and that factual information from electronic mail cannot be confirmed. More than others in the newsroom, they fear that someone will use their personal electronic mail address to send a message or that someone other than an intended recipient will read their electronic mail. They are also more worried about receiving spam or junk electronic mail. Editors also expressed concern— more than other respondents— that messages that they send will be forwarded to people who were not intended to see it.

There were no gender differences found on the volume of business or personal electronic mail messages received each day. Similarly, there were no gender differences or age group differences in terms of the proportions of interviews conducted in person, by telephone, by electronic mail, or by other means.

Older respondents—defined as those in the upper 50% of the group—received more business messages each day than their younger counterparts. Older respondents, likely functioning in a supervisory and newsroom management role more than younger staff members, received a mean 22.58 messages per day compared to younger respondents at 8.79 (F=14.168, df=1,190, p=0.000). There were no other statistically significant age group differences.

Similarly, newsroom managers received a statistically significant larger number of messages than their reporter counterparts. Newsroom managers reported receiving a mean 32.87 messages per day compared to 23.87 for others roles, 10.66 for beat reporters, and 8.61 for general assignment reporters (F=9.103, df=3,191, p=0.000). The LSD (least significant difference) *post hoc* comparisons analysis revealed significant message volume differences between newsroom managers and beat reporters and general assignment reporters. Those individuals in "other" roles were also significantly different from both groups of reporters.

In terms of messages sent, beat reporters were more active although differences were generally insignificant. Newsroom managers (2.07) and general assignment reporters (3.93) were significantly different (p=0.046) There were, however, no differences in the volume of personal messages sent or received by these groups.

Looking at the proportion of interviews conducted using electronic mail and other more traditional approaches, no significant difference in newsroom roles were found. Similarly, there were *no* statistically significant differences in how beginning, intermediate, and advanced computer users viewed their concerns about electronic mail or in the proportions of interviews devoted to telephone, in-person, electronic mail, or other approaches.

There was, however, a statistically significant difference in the number of electronic mail messages sent for business purposes. Beginning computer users reported receiving significantly more messages (30.50) than intermediate users (12.80) or advanced users (19.37) (F=3.344, df=2,192, p=0.037). The LSD *post hoc* comparison analysis of beginners to intermediate users (p=0.024) was significantly different.

CONCLUSIONS

The growth of electronic mail use among journalists has been documented in recent research.[44] While some studies have looked at electronic mail use, little depth of knowledge of this use is found in the literature of mass communication. This study opens several lines of inquiry about electronic mail as a newsgathering device for newspaper journalists. Clearly, the levels of use and types of uses are important focal points for inquiry. The credibility of the information obtained by electronic mail is still another significant area.

Is newsgathering changing because of electronic mail? Are there concerns that journalists hold about their use of electronic mail to obtain press releases, news alerts, or to conduct interviews for news stories? This study attempts to address those issues and provide, at least, preliminary answers.

It is apparent from this study that there are a wide range of uses and levels of use among daily newspaper journalists. This suggests a learning process is underway.

Perhaps journalists are still determining if electronic mail has a serious role in newsgathering. As electronic mail technology evolves, new features open new possibilities. There is little evidence of journalists using sophisticated forms of electronic mail such as video or audio messaging, conferencing, group mailing lists, or even video or audio attachments. But this study did not specifically investigate these issues.

Journalists appear to find different ways to enhance their work. Perhaps follow-up research can determine how different groups of journalists use electronic mail most successfully. New research into newsroom and industry training programs will provide further understanding about how and what journalists learn about use of electronic mail and the various effects of these uses.

The role of electronic mail in the interview process remains unclear. Electronic mail use for interviews is simply too new. Most journalists in this study do not depend on electronic mail to conduct interviews. Telephone and in-person interviews remain dominant. However, it is apparent that some journalists are using electronic mail for interviews and it would be valuable to probe further to determine the types of interviews and types of information that have been used for interviews.

There are also a wide range of legitimate concerns about use of electronic mail in a journalistic context. The concerns these journalists have expressed deal less with the quality of the information obtained and more with the technology itself and its effects on the newsroom. Emphasis on wasted time and resources caused by unwanted and unsolicited junk electronic mail rates highest among journalists' worries. However, worry about lost work or other damage which is caused by viruses and other malicious software rates very high with these respondents. The second- and third-highest worries relate to lost information or data and damage to newsroom computer networks and systems that might be caused by a network-transmitted virus. Has this fear of problems caused by electronic mail reduced or slowed its journalistic use? The data in this study do not offer a sufficient explanation, but the effects of such concerns should be investigated in further research.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing findings of the study involves newsroom roles. Editors are much more concerned about the security and credibility of information in electronic mail than others in the newsroom. Clearly, editors, supervisors, and other newsroom managers take a more reasoned view of sources of information used in their newspapers. This includes electronic mail. They appear to be much more concerned about problems that may occur in information obtained through electronic mail than are beat or general assignment reporters. Analysis of the sixteen-statement worries scale indicates editors are statistically different on nearly half of the items. Certainly this distinction commands additional research in future study.

The study found no major differences in how men and women view these sixteen concerns about electronic mail. Similarly, there are few differences according to age. While there were very few differences found by gender and age, there were some useful findings in terms of how newsroom managers used electronic mail. Newsroom managers received much more electronic mail than their colleagues. This is clearly a function of their roles. It is not clear from the data what types of messages they received, but it is likely that many of these messages are primarily unsolicited press releases, contact from other potential sources, reader contacts, and internal communication from their own superiors, their reporters, and other subordinates. Editors also demonstrate a more traditional approach to interviewing with greater dependence on in-person interviews than use of electronic mail or the telephone. Again, this may be more a function of the role played in the newsroom than personal preferences, but additional research must be conducted to fully understand these differences.

There were no differences in self-evaluated level of computer expertise and usage of electronic mail. Computer literate individuals are likely to use the computer differently from less skilled users. While this is still another area of new inquiry, it might suggest more volume of use, greater diversity in types of use, or other fundamental differences. In terms of electronic mail use in this study, beginners were more involved with electronic mail—at least in terms of sending business messages. This finding hints, of course, that more experienced electronic mail users might have passed beyond the "fascination" stage and have made attempts to limit their daily use of it.

As with all exploratory descriptive research, this study would be strengthened with a theoretical base that offers some fundamental understanding of newsroom communication and new technologies or that places use of electronic mail in a larger context of the information gathering process. That foundation does not exist, apparently, but it is hoped that the findings reported in this analysis may contribute toward creation of a process model or more comprehensive theoretical framework for new research. Grounded theory, of course, originates from such research.[45]

The study sample design may have been improved with a purposive sampling design, using reporters and management-level editors. This would likely have led to proportional sizing of respondent groups for data analysis by newsroom role and may have increased the size of the editors group and, possibly, created better balance among general assignment and beat reporters.

Greater clarification of the several applications involving electronic mail may have improved this study. It is possible that respondents may not have been specific about certain uses, such as distribution lists, discussion groups, mailing lists, and even newsgroups. Because some users read electronic mail with clients that do not also view newsgroups, it would have strengthened the study to separate more carefully these applications and their uses. Similarly, solicited and unsolicited electronic mail are quite different and need additional investigation. The wide variety in messaging systems and capabilities of electronic mail clients in newsrooms must also be considered in greater detail in a study such as this one.

It would be valuable to determine the level of access to electronic mail. This study provided only foundational descriptive data about individual respondent access to the Internet and electronic mail. Even today, it is apparent that not all reporters and editors have electronic mail access on their own desktops. What is the impact of less convenient access—such as a central shared computer in a newsroom—on newsgathering usage? Is it used less in newsgathering? Additionally, are there privacy issues involved? If so, what is their impact? This study did not determine an answer to those questions.

Electronic mail remains relatively new in corporate and organizational communication. Further research will assist scholars in understanding how it impacts on specific types of communication, such as that required by journalists in newspaper and other news media newsrooms. The study provides insight into newsgathering uses of the fast-growing network-based communication tool. With the increasing use and dependence upon electronic mail in newsrooms, better understanding is necessary to provide efficient and effective use by reporters and editors, as well as by their sources. Furthermore, we may be able to avoid many of the problems inherent in use of network messaging systems. The knowledge gained from this analysis may be helpful to publishers and newsroom managers as they consider investments in network communication and information-gathering technologies in the immediate future and over the long-term.

TABLE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Gender	
Male	57.0%
Female	43.0
Role in newsroom	
Beat reporter	58.5%
General assignment reporter	14.5
Newsroom supervisor-manager	15.5
Section editor	3.5
Visual specialist	0.5
Other	7.5
Self-reported level of computer expertise	
Beginner	6.0%
Intermediate	66.5
Advanced	27.5
Access electronic mail in the newsroom	91.5%
Access business electronic mail from home	34.2
Access personal electronic mail from home	75.3

	Mean	SD	Median
Age	36.58	11.81	34.00
Years of experience as journalist	11.69	9.73	8.00
Newspaper circulation	44,406.04	87,962.90	20,000.00

n = 201

TABLE 2

LEADING NEWSROOM USES OF ELECTRONIC MAIL

Correspond with sources	75.1%
Correspond with colleagues	61.2
Correspond with superiors	45.3
Send stories or other news content to the newsroom	33.8
Subscribe to distribution lists	28.9
Subscribe to discussion groups or news groups	12.4
Other	13.0

n = 201

TABLE 3

ELECTRONIC MAIL AND INFORMATION LIST MESSAGE VOLUME

	Mean	SD	Median
Business electronic mail messages received per day	15.71	26.08	9.00
Business electronic mail messages sent per day	5.45	9.28	3.00
Personal electronic mail messages received per day	7.95	11.90	5.00
Personal electronic mail messages sent per day	3.52	4.96	2.00
Distribution lists used	3.79	2.73	3.00
News alert services used	2.60	1.98	2.00

n = 201

TABLE 4

MEAN, SD SCORES FOR ELECTRONIC MAIL USE ISSUES

	Mean	SD
I spend too much time reading and deleting "junk" or "spam" E-mail messages I don't want to receive	3.03	1.40
I might download an E-mail virus or worm and lose important information on my computer	2.99	1.36
I might download an E-mail virus or worm and damage the newsroom computer network	2.98	1.40
I should not express personal opinions in business E-mail, on distribution lists, or news groups	2.50	1.41
My E-mail will be read by someone other than the person I sent it to	2.47	1.29
E-mail messages that I have sent will not be delivered or received	2.44	1.08
I will lose important E-mail stored on my computer	2.42	1.22
Someone else will read my E-mail on my computer	2.40	1.26
I will inadvertently send a message to the wrong person	2.29	1.16
An E-mail message that I sent will be forwarded to people that I had not wanted to see it	2.28	1.20
I should not use information sent to me in a message because the source may have thought it was not for publication	2.26	1.32
E-mail interviews do not provide very credible information	2.24	1.36
Facts obtained in an E-mail interview cannot be confirmed	2.16	1.27
Someone I interview using E-mail will not be the person I think it is	2.00	1.32
The direct quotations I take from a message and use in a story may somehow be quoted out of context	1.97	1.21
Someone will use my personal E-mail address to send a message	1.83	1.06

n = 201. Minimum "do not worry about it at all" = 1, the mid-point = 3, and maximum "worry about it a lot" = 5.

TABLE 5

PROPORTIONS OF USE OF INTERVIEW APPROACHES

	Mean	SD	Median
Interviews conducted in person	41.73%	20.86%	40.00%
Interviews conducted on the telephone	51.34	21.03	50.00
Interviews conducted by electronic mail	6.46	8.93	5.00
Interviews conducted by other means	4.56	3.54	5.00

n = 201

TABLE 6

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN ELECTRONIC MAIL USE

	Male	Female	F	(df)	p
Someone I interview using E-mail will not be the person I think it is	1.98	2.03	0.051	(1,182)	.822
I should not use information sent to me in a message because the source may have thought it was not for publication	2.29	2.23	0.110	(1,185)	.740
The direct quotations I take from a message and use in a story may somehow be quoted out of context	2.03	1.90	0.510	(1,182)	.476
E-mail interviews do not provide very credible information	2.36	2.08	2.032	(1,183)	.155
Facts obtained in an E-mail interview cannot be confirmed	2.21	2.10	0.336	(1,183)	.563
Someone else will read my E-mail on my computer	**2.10**	**2.73**	**8.025**	**(1,119)**	**.005**
Someone will use my personal E-mail address to send a message	1.81	1.86	0.090	(1,119)	.765
I might download an E-mail virus or worm and lose important information on my computer	2.77	3.22	3,331	(1,119)	.070
I might download an E-mail virus or worm and damage the newsroom computer network	2.76	3.30	3.116	(1,119)	.080
My E-mail will be read by someone other than the person I sent it to	2.45	2.49	0.029	(1,119)	.866
I will inadvertently send a message to the wrong person	2.20	2.39	0.823	(1,118)	.365
I will lose important E-mail stored on my computer	2.23	2.63	3.318	(1,119)	.071
I spend too much time reading and deleting "junk" or "spam" E-mail messages I don't want to receive	2.89	3.19	1.401	(1,119)	.239
E-mail messages that I have sent will not be delivered or received	2.32	2.56	1.460	(1,119)	.229
An E-mail message that I sent will be forwarded to people that I had not wanted to see it	2.39	2.17	0.968	(1,118)	.328
I should not express personal opinions in business E-mail, on distribution lists, or news groups	2.26	2.75	3.656	(1,116)	.058

n = 201. Significant p values are boldfaced. Note: Minimum "do not worry about it at all" = 1, the mid-point = 3, and maximum "worry about it a lot" = 5.

TABLE 7

AGE DIFFERENCES IN ELECTRONIC MAIL USE

	≤34	>34	F	(df)	p
Someone I interview using E-mail will not be the person I think it is	1.84	2.17	2.863	(1,180)	.092
I should not use information sent to me in a message because the source may have thought it was not for publication	2.23	2.28	0.063	(1,184)	.803
The direct quotations I take from a message and use in a story may somehow be quoted out of context	1.98	1.97	0.004	(1,181)	.950
E-mail interviews do not provide very credible information	2.16	2.32	0.613	(1,182)	.435
Facts obtained in an E-mail interview cannot be confirmed	2.03	2.37	1.691	(1,182)	.195
Someone else will read my E-mail on my computer	2.54	2.24	1.706	(1,118)	.194
Someone will use my personal E-mail address to send a message	1.72	1.96	1.530	(1,118)	.219
I might download an E-mail virus or worm and lose important information on my computer	2.82	3.16	1.999	(1,118)	.160
I might download an E-mail virus or worm and damage the newsroom computer network	2.83	3.11	1.192	(1,118)	.277
My E-mail will be read by someone other than the person I sent it to	2.43	2.53	0.164	(1,118)	.686
I will inadvertently send a message to the wrong person	**2.51**	**2.04**	**4.958**	**(1,117)**	**.028**
I will lose important E-mail stored on my computer	2.52	2.33	0.764	(1,118)	.384
I spend too much time reading and deleting "junk" or "spam" E-mail messages I don't want to receive	2.92	3.20	1.177	(1,117)	.280
E-mail messages that I have sent will not be delivered or received	2.48	2.40	0.149	(1,118)	.700
An E-mail message that I sent will be forwarded to people that I had not wanted to see it	2.34	2.22	0.274	(1,117)	.601
I should not express personal opinions in business E-mail, on distribution lists, or news groups	2.44	2.54	0.124	(1,115)	.725

n = 201. Significant p values are boldfaced. Note: Minimum "do not worry about it at all" = 1, the mid-point = 3, and maximum "worry about it a lot" = 5.

TABLE 8

NEWSROOM ROLE DIFFERENCES IN ELECTRONIC MAIL USE

	Beat	GA	Editor	Other	F	(df)	p
Someone I interview using E-mail will not be the person I think it is	1.95	1.93	2.41	1.46	1.929	(3,180)	.126
I should not use information sent to me in a message because the source may have thought it was not for publication	2.17	2.18	2.56	2.36	0.818	(3,183)	.486
The direct quotations I take from a message and use in a story may somehow be quoted out of context	**1.78**	**2.29**	**2.50**	**1.57**	**4.448**	**(3,180)**	**.005**
E-mail interviews do not provide very credible information	**2.02**	**2.03**	**3.14**	**2.07**	**7.021**	**(3,181)**	**.000**
Facts obtained in an E-mail interview cannot be confirmed	**1.95**	**1.90**	**3.00**	**2.21**	**7.109**	**(3,181)**	**.000**
Someone else will read my E-mail on my computer	2.46	1.64	2.70	2.50	2.185	(3,117)	.094
Someone will use my personal E-mail address to send a message	**1.78**	**1.36**	**2.45**	**1.50**	**3.618**	**(3,117)**	**.015**
I might download an E-mail virus or worm and lose important information on my computer	2.89	2.86	3.30	4.00	1.286	(3,117)	.283
I might download an E-mail virus or worm and damage the newsroom computer network	2.92	2.93	3.20	3.25	0.274	(3,117)	.844
My E-mail will be read by someone other than the person I sent it to	**2.54**	**1.57**	**2.95**	**1.75**	**3.953**	**(3,117)**	**.010**
I will inadvertently send a message to the wrong person	2.35	1.79	2.40	2.25	1.022	(3,116)	.386
I will lose important E-mail stored on my computer	2.43	2.14	2.30	3.75	1.928	(3,117)	.129
I spend too much time reading and deleting "junk" or "spam" E-mail messages I don't want to receive	**2.78**	**3.14**	**3.90**	**3.50**	**3.875**	**(3,116)**	**.011**
E-mail messages that I have sent will not be delivered or received	2.51	2.00	2.40	2.75	0.998	(3,117)	.396
An E-mail message that I sent will be forwarded to people that I had not wanted to see it	**2.36**	**1.38**	**2.60**	**2.00**	**3.283**	**(3,116)**	**.023**
I should not express personal opinions in business E-mail, on distribution lists, or news groups	2.50	2.64	2.50	2.00	0.210	(3,114)	.889

n = 201. Significant p values are boldfaced. Note: Minimum "do not worry about it at all" = 1, the mid-point = 3, and maximum "worry about it a lot" = 5. *Post hoc* LSD test.

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Watching the Watchdogs:

An Ethnomethodological Study Of News Decision Making At A Small Midwestern Newspaper

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ABSTRACT

This ethnomethodolgical study of news decision-making at a small Midwestern city newspaper involved six-week long persistent behavioral observation of news budget sessions, the core of the gatekeeping process' news routines level. Through the qualitative paradigm of descriptive and interpretive epistemology, we identified four typologies of determinants – time-space dimension, content-based considerations, nature of news, intersubjectivity, and external pressure – as crucial in the sociology of news decided for the front page of the newspaper. This study confirmed several past findings, but democratic consensus, often accompanied by self-criticism, emerged unique and often as a decisive factor in this case.

INTRODUCTION

In their book *Analyzing Media Messages*, Daniel Riffe and colleagues (Riffe et al., 1998, p.7) highlight the significance of front-page news. They write: "a newspaper's front page might be examined as a consequence of the news organization's selection from an array of possible stories, or one can view [the front page] as reflecting editor's application of what journalists call news judgment." They view the front page of the newspaper as "the product of media routines, practices, and values" (Riffe et al.1998, p.7). The sociological interpretation of media content – that it is a mediation of professional practices and values rather than the reflection of reality – forms their theoretical basis. This paper agrees with their assumption, and drawing from the interpretative dimension of social science inquiry focuses on the news process rather than the news output. The authors consider it important to look at news in process, or what sociologists Sharrok and Button (1991, p. 158) would call *events-in-a-social-order*, because we believe that truth is contextual, largely dependent on the self-organizing, and constantly oscillating social settings.

Scholarship on the sociology of news traditionally has focused on news production, newsrooms, deviance, and news making (Park 1923; Tuchman 1978; Gans 1979; Hall 1982; Gitlin 1978; Schudson 1996; Sumpter 2000). These studies often are the products of participant observations or occupational accounts that sharply divert from the dominant paradigm of positivism and "abstract empiricism" in media studies. The ontological and epistemological tensions between empiricism and interpretivism provide as many methodological options as they underscore the hostility within the discipline (Jones 2000). This study is based on the interpretative epistemology, and it sets out to explore the nuances concerning the values and norms of news judgments at a particular news milieu rather than analyzing effects and causalities.

Stuart Hall's critique of the term "communication" is relevant to our study. Communication, according to Hall, traditionally has narrowed media studies; substantially, by focusing only on "products" explicitly produced by and delivered over mass media; and methodologically, by isolating us from an entire body of critical, interpretive, and comparative methodology that has been at the heart of anthropology and the study of literature (Carey 1989; p. 41-42). Like Hall, we reject this narrow definition, and take here an interpretive approach – ethnomethodology – in the study of news decision making at a newspaper in the local context. This study is focused on the decisions made for the front page of the newspaper. We asked the following open-ended research questions:

- How do editors in news meetings at a small midwestern newspaper decide which stories run on the front page?
- How do they transform situations or preserve situations "unchanged"?
- How do they reinforce formal rules dictated by routines, and how do they break those rules?

The Making of News: Routines, Constraints and Consensus

The general assumption is that the front page of a newspaper reflects the most important news stories of the previous day. But, as journalism scholars and researchers have shown, that assumption is not entirely accurate. What makes a topic newsworthy depends not only on news judgment but also on newspaper reporters' and editors' work routines (Tuchman 1978, Shoemaker & Reese 1996, Sumpter 2000). News is a social configuration that is made within a group of constricted practices and cultural norms. Reporters and editors conform to sets of professional rules, beliefs and expectations that limit the decisions and choices they make (Shoemaker & Reese, p. 106-7). For instance, Herbert Gans (1979, p. 42) identified ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, social order, and national leadership as enduring values of American newspapers.

Gans, and other media sociologists such as Gaye Tuchman, Mark Fishman, and Edward Jay Epstein have studied the news making production within a theoretical framework that conceptualizes the role of routines in news making (Lowrey 1999). These theorists suggest that news is a manufactured product, news organizations create routines to successfully manage the unexpected, individual journalists embrace professional values that serve organizational routines that largely determine the news product, and work material, organizational flexibility and professionalism are interrelated.

At the organizational level, rules and limitations become important to coordinate activities (Rosenblum 1978). These constraints become an integral part of the daily work process and they delineate the importance of practical factors. News professionalism develops in agreement with news organizations (Tuchman 1978). Employees compete for the control of work processes and professional practices are designed to serve organizational needs. Professionals in the field inevitably negotiate, within their own environment, about work roles and responsibilities; these negotiations include the sharing of sources and information.

By studying control over work, one can understand the way journalists make decisions in terms of range of opportunities available within a news environment. Rosenblum (1978) believes the division of labor, diffusion of technology and decision-making process all are vital in understanding the way work settings set boundaries on the range of photographic choices. Lowrey (1999) stresses further organizational constraints that affect news making, such as time, structure, staffing and decision-making.

Organizations impose routines to control the flow of work and the amount of work to be done (Tuchman 1978). Vital information can be gained by studying news organizations and the routines of news making; thus, it becomes imperative to uncover routines that determine and create the content of the news product (Lowrey 1999).

The so-called gatekeeping function of news workers allows choices to be made on which messages reach the public via the media, but those decisions depend not only on the individual but also on the news institution's core vales (Shoemaker & Reese, p. 105). In her seminal 1978 study, *Making News*, Gaye Tuchman determined that news is a socially constructed reality (Tuchman, p. 2, p. 12). Work routines are crucial to determining which stories are considered news. For example, Tuchman found that because a salaried reporter was assigned to a city hall bureau, news from city hall was favored over other locations simply because of proximity and the reporters' social relationships with sources (p. 24). Randall Sumpter (2000) also found social constructions in his study of a Southwestern newspaper, noting that editors at the paper made decisions on which stories newspaper audiences wanted to read by relying on comments from "their spouses, chance encounters with strangers, and telephone calls and letters from readers" (p. 338), or even on fictional readers that existed only in their imaginations.

Space, resources and time constraints play vital roles in the news routine and selection of news. The daily news cycle is the primary temporal measure on which decisions are based. For a morning daily newspaper, information is gathered throughout the day, submitted by evening deadlines, edited and laid out on pages, then printed and distributed. The cycle ends at night and begins again the next morning. Limits on the amount of space in the newspaper, unpredicted occurrences and deadlines are components of the news cycle (Shoemaker & Reese, p. 118, Tuchman, p. 42-3). To manage the cycle and its unpredictability, news organizations employ structured routines, which include editorial meetings. These meetings are a component of the decision-making and gatekeeping processes. Gatekeeping is a both a social and collaborative process, according to Clayman and Reisner (1998). Editors gather, usually two or more times a day, to discuss stories being investigated and written by reporters, as well as photographs being taken and graphics composed. Editors decide, often by consensus, which stories are most important and compelling and therefore should receive the most prominent placement in the newspaper. The front page, or page one, usually is assumed to be the premier location for a news story. Researchers note that the editors' decision-making process is a social action negotiated through a framework of social relationships at the newspaper (Clayman & Reisner, p. 196).

Journalism researchers have studied timeliness as a component of news routines and cycles. Stories may be reported, edited and placed in the newspaper depending on the time they occur. Dan Berkowitz (1990) found in a study of a local television newscast that timeliness and significance were the most important predictors of news stories being broadcast (p. 89), while logistics and resources also were strong determinants (p. 90).

Convenience and deadlines also are important factors, meaning that events falling during normal business hours are more likely to be covered than events happening at other times, despite the fact reporters are scheduled to work at various times of the day (Shoemaker & Reese, p. 119, Tuchman, p. 45). Writing and publishing deadlines also are key.

Space constraints also affect story coverage and placement. Text, photographs, graphics and advertisements share space with news stories. American newspapers depend on advertising to keep their businesses running, and advertisers may command newspapers' "news hole," or available space, because of advertising's importance and influence (Shoemaker & Reese, p. 195). If more advertisers purchase more newspaper space, then news and other editorial content may occupy less space.

Photographic considerations also affect placement of news. Rosenblum (1978) writes that all photographs selected are made informationally relevant to the story they accompany. Photographs are published to emulate reality. But since there are many layers of subjective reality between visual content and the real world, each published photograph is the product of chain of gatekeepers (Bissell, 2000). In other words through gatekeeping many decision about visual content are constantly being made. Each photograph passes through a selection process that involves choices about which photographs will be used and which parts of the image will be printed and how much space will be allocated to key imagery.

In addition, news is affected by competition. A news organization is more likely to cover a story if another media organization covers it (Shoemaker & Reese, p. 122). Editors constantly monitor other news organizations and wire services to determine their choices and emphases on stories.

Research also has found that news tends to rely on mainstay topics, most involving "bad" news, including crime, accidents and disasters, and politics and government (Gant & Dimmick 2000).

In sum, the professional rules, beliefs, and expectations help news workers to manage their often uncertain and unpredictable routines. However, these values and norms that limit the decisions and choices journalists and editors make could vary depending on the type, size and location of a newspaper. In this study, we examine one Midwestern newspaper and the decisions its editors made about which stories to place on the front page over a six-week period in fall 2001. We examined editorial decisions, taking into account news routines and structures; cultural norms; newsroom limitations, rules and other constraints; space, resources and time; and competition.

Adapting To Limits: Watchdogs As Gatekeepers

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) argue for an understanding of the influences that shape content of news media, how it is made and shaped, and finally produced. Their approach is aimed at content influence studies as opposed to process and effects studies. They observe that news content is shaped and influenced by several hierarchical factors (p. 183).

These factors range from the micro level (e.g., the individual media worker, media routines, and media organization) to the macro level (e.g., extra-media and ideology), graphically illustrated through concentric circles of influences (see Appendix II). These hierarchical circles illustrate that news content is produced by individual media workers but is influenced by the nature of the particular news organization and the national economic and ideological environment. The authors group the circles into two categories: micro level factors and macro level factors. The micro level factors consist of individual media workers, media routines, and organizational roles. The macro level influences include extra-media and ideological factors (p. 102).

Gatekeeping studies (White 1950; Gieber 1960; Hirsch 1977, Becker 1982) have long held that news decision makers act like gatekeepers, an idea that suggests they must adapt to physical limits to cope with routines. As noted by Shoemaker and her colleague, this term bridges the inner core (individual level and media routines level) and the outer ring of their hierarchical circular model of mediation. Our study is concerned with the core of the core of the routines level of this hierarchy; i.e., the news decision makers in their routinized, collective form, not as individuals.

One important thing needs to be clarified. The idea of gatekeeping – news workers consciously "funneling down news events down to a few one" (Shoemaker et al. 1996, p. 119) in order to cope with physical constraints – renders the journalistic principle of objectivity as "elusive" (p. 4). This view underscores that reality is socially produced, and rejects the traditional "mirror" theory of the news, which believes in the concept of journalists as detached and neutral watchdogs. In other words, in this theoretical framework and also for the purpose of our study, the news decision makers are individuals, situated in a particular context, who have subjective or reflexive judgments.

METHOD

In line with the above reasoning on the reflexive posture of news decision makers, we based our study on ethnomethodology, an ethnographic observational approach that, according to Harold Garfinkel (1967), encompasses indexicality and reflexivity of the everyday lived realities of human beings. Indexicality purports that reality is contextual, that can only be understood through common sense reasoning, through items of significance that stand as an "index" for what lies beyond. Reflexivity asserts that human beings live in the world of particular situations, though general concepts are used to interpret them (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 1-34). Our goal was to study the news decisions at the newspaper as *events-in-a-social-order* (Sharrok and Button), or within their own context, without any external generalization.

We were primarily concerned with the "how" question, as the name of ethnomethodology suggests. Watson and Goulet (1998) observed that ethnomethodology:

> …asks how people get things done—how they transform situations or how they preserve situations "unchanged," step by step, and from moment to moment… it is interested in ordinary methods as opposed to those of the theorists… the methods of reasoning that people employ as they go about their everyday

> business rather than the rules of formal logic, and the methods that they use to communicate effectively in conversation rather than structural linguistics. (Watson & Goulet, 1998, p. 96-97)

In line with Watson and Goulet's (1998) exposition, we embraced an inductive approach, observing the phenomenon uniquely, without the notions of formal logic, focusing on the actual and unfolding behaviors of the editors. As a qualitative approach, the study remained fully adhered to the canons of humanistic method; remaining fully sensitive to epistemological validity; i.e., recognizing that only honesty, integrity, and veridicality would ensure accuracy and truth in constructing the world of the subjects. Hence, throughout this paper, we have been forthright with any incoherent particulars, constantly maintaining observational and contemplative acuity.[1] Despite our use of subjectivity and emotionality, we recognize that both physical and ideal realities exist in the world, for ethnomethodology is particularly interested in "how people produce phenomena as objective or not objective, that is, as existing (or not) prior to and independently of their discourses about them" (Watson & Goulet, 1998, p. 96-97).

Thomson et al. (1998) suggest that prolonged engagement and persistent observation, depth of analysis, learning rhetorical codes over time, dealing with dissimilar people, using informants and triangulating the methods with interviews go a long way in ensuring epistemological validity. The authors, all having substantial working experience as journalists before coming to academia, were not entirely unfamiliar with the field and the discourse related to the field. This proved advantageous in that the authors could maintain a fresh look at news decision sessions after several years, but at the same time with an insider's understanding of the generalities of news decision-making processes. Hence, the only challenge in this regard was observing uniquely, with the local context in mind, in an effort to subject ourselves to the set of contingencies that played upon the phenomenon under study so that we could "physically and ecologically penetrate" (Goffman 1989; p. 125) the subjects' circle of response to their work situation.

In this study we are concerned specifically with front-page placement of stories at a small, midwestern daily newspaper (circulation is approximately 7,000). With the consent of the editors, we observed editorial meetings (see appendices III & IV, visual specimens) at the newspaper, watching editors' behavior, to determine how a news story gets to page one. We were concerned primarily with the behaviors and actions of the editors, who have the ultimate say on story placement. Gatekeepers, defined as people in key positions of influence who control the flow of information (Clayman & Reisner, p. 178), are appropriate subjects of study because of the potential power they hold.

The newspaper we studied, a morning paper that publishes six days a week, has direct competition from a local afternoon newspaper that has a circulation of about 20,000 and indirect competition from three local television stations that air news broadcasts. Two radio stations in the area broadcast National Public Radio newscasts and local news programs. The media serve a university city of about 84,000 people (U.S. Census 2000) and nearby farmbased communities. The broadcast media also serve a 40,000-population (U.S. Census 2000) state capital about 30 miles away, which has a local newspaper. After submitting our plan of study to our university's Institutional Review Board (required for all studies involving human subjects), we agreed not to name the newspaper nor the employees observed. We protected their anonymity in the event their actions or words affected their current or future jobs.

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[1] From the notes taken during an ethnographic methods course taught by Dr. M. Robbins, University of Missouri Columbia (Fall 2001).

Based on our literature review we identified five categories that have a bearing on how editors would decide news for the front page of their newspaper. These categories were fine-tuned as time-space dimensions (constraints related to time and space), content-based considerations (placement of photographs and other visual images), nature of news (emphasis bad news), intersubjectivity (group consensus), and external pressure (competition and other considerations). These categories emerged from past studies primarily concerned with news in general. Our goal was to observe how these would apply to the front page of the newspaper, while at the same time remaining fully open to other typologies that would emerge, if any, during the course of our observation.

The study was based on six weeks of behavioral observation in fall 2001. We chose the newspaper because of its proximity to the researchers, its willingness to participate in the study and its presence as a "typical" community newspaper. As a preliminary orientation we observed four editorial meetings to determine whether the newspaper was an appropriate subject. Confident that it was, we attended at least two news meetings per week, one morning meeting and one afternoon meeting. The newspaper usually holds two editors' meetings per day. We hoped that by attending these meetings we would be able to determine how decisions for page one were made, and also to observe the behavior of editors. We were invited to attend as many meetings as we wished, and we routinely sampled one weekday morning, one weekday afternoon, and one Friday meeting per week. Because the newspaper does not publish on Saturdays, the Friday editors' meetings are more comprehensive than other meetings because they encompass the content of two editions: the Sunday and Monday editions.

One, two or three observers attended each meeting and took notes on editors' behavior, discussion and decisions. We developed a coding list (see Appendix I) to distinguish among editors without identifying them by name. The observers sat through meetings, approximately 30 to 40 minutes long, and watched and listened to the editors while taking notes. At each meeting we were provided with a copy of the budget, or list of stories, being considered for the following day's newspaper. We did not interact with editors during the meetings but sometimes would talk to individuals before and afterward. Several student observers affiliated with a local university also attended several of these meetings.

We typed our notes after each meeting and kept a file of our observations. Over the six weeks, we gathered in a group several times to discuss themes we observed during the newspaper meetings. To continue our inductive reasoning, we reached consensus on several themes we thought defined the decision-making process during the editors' meetings at this newspaper. After deciding on these themes, we examined our notes to find examples that backed up these themes. We combined these anecdotes to illustrate in words the categories we created.

OBSERVATIONS: Watching the Watchdogs

Editors at the newspaper we observed consistently followed gatekeeping processes described in much of the previous literature. News routines and cycles were paramount to decision-making. We analyzed the editors' news selection strategies in terms of the categories that emerged from much of the past literature: time-space dimensions, content-based considerations, nature of news, intersubjectivity, and external pressure. It is important to note that during our observations, the United States became involved in a war in Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001 bombings of the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Another factor was an anthrax scare that gripped the United States.

Time-space dimensions: Time and space constraints were essential to decisions on where stories were placed. If a story occurred close to or after the evening deadline of 7 p.m., it was unlikely to get onto the front page, or even into the paper at all. Only if a story was considered by a majority of editors to be important could it be placed on the front page after the evening deadline. For example, editors decided at one Friday meeting that if baseball player Barry Bonds broke the all-time homerun record, they would change their plans for page one. Bonds broke the record that night, and the newspaper does not publish on Saturday, so the editors and page designers had an extra day to redesign the front page. The Bonds story ran on the front page Sunday.

Space also presented limits. Editors often talked about cutting the length of stories or number of photographs because space was "tight." Lack of space meant that the story or the visual content was not worthy enough to discard another news item. In one meeting, an editor in charge of layout expressed concern about the use of color on page one. The editor explained that advertisers who purchased space dictated where color would be used. At another meeting, editors expressed support for a story a sports reporter had written about the way people react to the national anthem. The reporter said she hoped the story would run on page one Sunday, and editors agreed. However, because of stories already planned for Sunday, the executive editor and layout editor said the story would not be able to run that week.

Even the most immediate and potentially very significant events did not merit front-page coverage if they were not timely. A proposed news story concerned the annual budget meeting underway at a local university, home to more than 23,000 students, the bulk of whom constitute the newspaper's target audience. The editors agreed this was an important story, but ruled out the possibility of carrying this story because they said no space was available in the next issue of the newspaper.

Editors normally discussed front-page layout three days in advance, after their lunch break. One editor disclosed that following the terrorist attacks of September 11, the front-page layout meetings had been discontinued because of the unusual work pressure on news room employees, and all decisions regarding the coverage, including the front page, were carried out during the budget meetings we observed. The editor also stressed the point that during the normal working period, much planning goes on outside the budget meeting with the constituents group.

Content-based considerations: The importance of photos and other visual images to a story's ability to get on page one became clear as we observed meetings. For example, an editor noted at one meeting that a story about bow hunters donating deer they killed to needy families would be much better if a photographer accompanied the reporter and took pictures. Another editor pitched a story about a high school astronaut program that would be enhanced over the weekend by photos of "throwing kids into a pool." Sometimes limited resources prevented editors from adding visual elements to stories.

A lack of resources led to the one bad news judgment call we observed during our time at the newspaper. At the beginning of one morning's editorial meeting, a reporter listening to a police scanner heard a call for ambulances at a traffic accident on the interstate highway that runs through the city. Later in the meeting, a reporter asked editors if a photographer could go to scene since there had been a fatality. However, the editors decided not to send anyone. A photo editor on duty that day offered several explanations. She said the newspaper usually does not publish photographs of traffic deaths and added that no photographers were available because of the two on duty, one was at an Air Force base and the other was shooting a news feature story about medical students paired with senior citizens.

Another factor may have been that the incident happened on a Friday and the newspaper does not publish on Saturday, so any story or photo could not run until Sunday. The competition still had an afternoon paper to publish on Friday. The story turned out to be important. Three high school students from a large city about 120 miles away were killed. They had been traveling to the smaller city to watch schoolmates play in a softball tournament. The newspaper we observed ran a story and a photo of softball players on its front page Sunday, but only after the big-city newspaper ran a story Saturday along with a photo credited to the local afternoon paper.

The emphasis on visual illustrations was dictated not only by the need to make the front page attractive or appealing but also by the desire to explain clearly the issue or event in question. The main editor held that the newspaper needed "to do a good job of explaining." In line with his dictum, one of his colleagues saw the need to put a map where "those anthrax cases" were. "We cannot figure them out when reading. It's all over in so many places." It was decided that the newspaper should carry a graphic pinpointing the places in the U.S. where the anthrax cases had occurred.

Nature of news: As other studies have found, so-called "bad news" was a prime choice for front-page placement, but editors were aware and conscientious about this phenomenon. One Friday meeting after a discussion about stories on war, children ill with sickle-cell anemia, bio-terrorism, domestic violence and other depressing topics, an editor commented, "We need some happy news." Another editor replied sarcastically, "Maybe something nice will happen Sunday." During our study, editors were put in the awkward and unfortunate position of covering the murder of the competition paper's sports editor. The editor was beaten to death outside his newspaper offices. Stories related to the death and the journalism communities' reactions ran on page one.

As a local newspaper serving a university town, the newspaper seemed primarily focused on issues and events in the vicinity of the university campus. (The city also is home to two colleges.) Typically, the main editor would open the meeting with the question, "Any comments from the weekend? Any developments on the campus?" Discussions mostly centered on the immediate but the localized "newsy" events related to the war against terrorism and the anthrax scare, both of which would fall under the conventional definition of "bad news." However, as the war against terrorism intensified and news volume on the subject stretched out, the editors saw the need to treat these events as "problem" stories, rather than inherently bad. For instance, the main editor became very self-critical during one meeting: "We have to provide facts to fight the fear not by way of scaring the people but by giving them power. Media has to get ahead of this game. Until today, we have not shown that the public health officials play a big role in this. If we show one case that would be great." His call for looking at "layers of responses" to an event or issue, rather than one-dimensional take constantly reminded his colleagues to balance their preoccupation with "problem stories" with the need for any positive, action-oriented outcome.

Aside from the problem stories, a variety of stories, ranging from local university, college and high school sports activities; the city's economic and business activities; schools; and local politics found room on the front page of the newspaper. The editors seemed fully aware of the newspaper's disregard to other important "positive" stories, an indication that they did not necessarily subscribe to the conventional notions of newsworthiness dictated by news rooms routines. During one meeting, the chief editor categorically pointed out the need to carry stories on agriculture. "Agriculture is perhaps the second largest industry in the state," he said. "We should be carrying stories on this."

Intersubjectivity: Recent studies on news routines have shown that gatekeeping has moved from an individual decision to a group process (Berkowitz, Tuchman). We found group consensus was an important facet of decision-making at the newspaper. The executive editor, the ultimate decision maker at the newspaper, consistently made a point of asking all editors to offer opinions and suggestions about stories and their placement. Morning meetings were held in the middle of the newsroom instead of in a conference room so reporters could offer their input. Usually, several student reporters attended the meetings. Editors seemed to choose stories based on consensus. If a particular editor thought a story was important, he or she would push for that story to get on the front page. If the other editors agreed, the story usually would run. In one meeting, after listing all stories slated to run on the front page on a white erase board in the middle of the newsroom, the executive editor asked anyone who happened to be in the room, "Does that work for a 1A? Is that one you'd read tomorrow?"

However, not all editors fully participated in the decision-making process. One editor maintained amazing silence throughout the meetings we observed. Rarely did he have any opinion to offer regarding story choice. Nevertheless, he would always agree with the majority decisions. The main editor would set the stage and tone of the meeting, but the majority always had its say. We did not find any gender-wise disparity in terms of participation, though there was a dearth of women editors at the newspaper. Editors also were overwhelmingly Caucasian. Only one was black and none was Hispanic or Asian. The majority ranged in age from late 20s to early 40s, making the group relatively homogenous.

The group consensus was not entirely driven by intense discussions and debates on the merit of one story over the other. The editors seemed to share a common notion of what constituted front-page news, a notion that did not need to be debated in every meeting, but was internalized, and routinized. For instance, on one Friday meeting the executive editor declared that the newspaper should be carrying a story on bio-terrorism. He sought consensus on the story, and asked, "Everybody agree?" Most were quiet but one editor replied, "Seems to resonate." It was decided the story should be carried on the front page. This intersubjective understanding on news judgment was hardly questioned, which only reinforced the shared definition of front-page news at the newspaper: timeliness, immediacy, intensity, oddities, or bad news, among others. But there were times that provided insight into the workings of the reporters, suggesting that there were occasions for breaking the formal rules of news decisions. In one Monday morning meeting the chief editor questioned an over-reliance on the news agenda. A proposed story concerned more than 200 layoffs at a steel company, which the editors found important. The chief editor emphasized that reporters should know enough to write about it. He was alarmed that the "budget drives you to story, not the story driving the budget." His argument was that there was no hard and fast rule about story choice, and the formal rules set by the budget were subject to change, depending on the idiosyncrasies of individual reporters and the unfolding nature of stories.

External pressures: Competition was important to the decision-making process. At almost every meeting we attended, the executive editor asked what stories the afternoon competing paper ran in its edition. One day, the executive editor reminded city news editors to offer stories to the Associated Press wire service. One city editor said he wanted to send a story about sick elk in the state that one of his reporters had uncovered, but wanted to wait until the afternoon newspaper's publishing deadline had passed. He noted that he didn't want the other paper to run the story verbatim; if the other paper wanted the story it would have to do its own reporting.

Another consistent external factor that had a bearing on the choice of news was the editors' use of wire services for clues on breaking news. The last pages of the typed news agenda always consisted of selections of wire headlines from which the editors developed their own story ideas or localized them. In a way, the wire headlines dictated to some extent what they did. However, the editors were not entirely content to use wire stories all the time, a sign that they challenged the prevailing tradition at the paper. One meeting closed with the main editor expressing happiness that for the last two days the paper had not carried a wire story on the front page. The emphasis seemed to be on doing stories by the papers own reporters.

The news meetings also reflected the pressures emanating from external forces, typically the news events in the larger society that competed for newspaper space. An unexpected finding of our study was the almost-constant use of humor in the news meetings, which some would classify as "dark" or "gallows" humor. In nearly every meeting we observed someone cracked a joke about a serious topic. Often these were jokes that some people might classify as tasteless or rude. For example, in one Friday meeting editors were planning for what they considered a "slow news" weekend, an editor mentioned a rumor about death threats against a university curator or curators. "We can only hope," he said, laughing and covering his mouth with his hand. "Well, we need *something* to spice this up." The same editor also once joked, when told a sexual predator had escaped from prison, "Let's hope he doesn't turn up in the newsroom." Another editor made a macabre joke after reports that postal workers had been infected with anthrax: "Maybe we should drop off some postal workers in Afghanistan with automatic weapons." Another editor commented on the possibility of bombing Iraq in retaliation to the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon: "They always pick on Iraq." All editors laughed. During our observations, the war in Afghanistan was underway coupled with an anthrax scare on the home front. As a result, the newsroom faced extra external pressure on work routines.

Management research in organizational behavior has shown that humor often is used in the workplace as a means of coping with stress and unease (Mendelson, Golen & Adams 1986, Davis & Kleiner 1989). Joking also can build ties and cohesiveness if it is not used offensively, in a hostile manner or to target individual employees (Duncan & Feisal 1989). The newspaper editors appeared to use humor to mollify the depressing topics they often discussed and also to bond with one another, a sort of "we're all in this together" mentality.

SIGNIFICANCE AND DISCUSSION

In this section we discuss the theoretical, methodological, substantive and practical significance of our study. We also discuss the limitations and future implications. This study was primarily concerned with how editors at a small newspaper decided which stories to place on the front page of the newspaper.

Theoretically, it was concerned with how editors, in their normal working environment, maintained the formal criteria for gatekeeping or how they changed or altered the rules governing their news judgments. The study confirmed many of the findings about gatekeeping in previous studies. The four criteria of news selection identified at the news meeting level of the gatekeeping process revealed very prominent factors that had a bearing in the immediate decision-making environment. Although time-space considerations, content-based constraints, characteristics of the news, group consensus, and external factors emerged vital to determining news for the front page of the newspaper, these factors were not always yielded to without self-criticism or self-evaluation. This shows editors were not passive subjects to the forces of routines, but were conscientious enough to break the vicious cycles of routines, if there were opportunities to do that.

Yet this study also shows the limited ability of gatekeeping theory to explain the gatekeeping processes at work in a newspaper where the focus is only on the decision-making level, excluding processes beyond routine decision-making sessions, from reporting to publication. Nevertheless, it shows how editors accomplish the initial, and perhaps the most visible and extensive work of selecting news events. From our observation, there was little to suggest that editors are detached and objective professionals or that they are tied to conventional notions of newsworthiness, and routines. Indeed, they often appeared self-critical about their own judgments and work habits. This shows that not only routines dictate the editors' work, but editors also find ways to manipulate routines to suit their purposes. Hence, gatekeeping appears to be a circular process, intertwined with the various levels of work at the news organization.

Methodologically, we limited our unobtrusive, non-verbal observations to the news budget meetings. The ethnomethodological approach enabled us to find out how editors changed and did not change formal rules of news selection, how they broke or reinforced those rules. For example, in one meeting an editor argued strongly for a preposterous story about a local artist who wanted to "paint the moon red" by encouraging people to simultaneously aim laser pointers at it. Because of her vocal support, the moon story landed on the front page, despite a quote in the article from a scientist who said the feat was highly unlikely. The story was an oddity that possessed no traditional news values; e.g. conflict, government involvement, high-profile subjects, potential to affect newspaper readers. It seemed more appropriate for a supermarket tabloid than a community newspaper. We speculate that editors might have departed from formal news selection rules to distract readers from the "bad news" of war in Afghanistan.

Frequent changes made in the place of meetings, the shifts in the mood of the subjects, the level of participation, the nature of news events discussed may have combined to affect the way we conducted our observations. Nevertheless, we believe our observations could capture the reflexive mood of the subjects in the given context. The reactive effect of our observations might have been minimal, given that we began the actual study only after we completed at least four preliminary observations. Also, an extended period of observation might have provided additional insight into the process of gatekeeping. During the period of study, the ongoing war against terrorism might have exerted extra pressure on the news organization, which could have influenced the way the editors made decisions.

In substance, our observations documented the verbalizations of news selection procedures for the front page of the newspaper, without considering other important stages of news production, such as reporting, writing, editing, and publication. As the study shows, gatekeeping extends beyond news decisions. Hence, we find it important to explore how those decisions were carried out, whether the finished product, the publication of those stories, reflected the choices made at the decision-making level, and whether the reporters and desk editors consistently followed those guidelines. In future studies, a number of approaches we did not employ could be used, such as textual or content analysis of the published stories, informant interviews or in-depth interviews with the editors.

On the practical level, this study probed the *events-in-social-order* or the actual work-place behavior of news decision makers, rather than analyzing their reported or assumed professional postures. Since this study focused on the interior core of the hierarchical circular model of gatekeeping process, the findings need to be analyzed specifically in this context. The study shows that in an actual workplace, common-sense reasoning rules supreme, and the academic theories of objective, detached and neutral journalism do not seem entirely relevant. There is no single theory or rule that explains how editors from the community newspaper decided what constituted front-page news. The physical constraints were there, and professional rules were binding, too; but the editors could circumvent them if they wanted to.

Since this study was basically concerned with how the decisions were made, further studies could look at not only the responses to news work routines at various levels of the news organizations but also ask why those decisions or responses are made.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The six-week long ethnomethodolgical observations of news decision-making at the newspaper focused on the core of news routines level of the gatekeeping process. The findings suggest the immediate factors that editors consider for the selection of front-page news include time-space constraints, content-based considerations, nature of news, group consensus, and external pressure. All these factors have been confirmed through previous ethnographies and case studies conducted by other researchers at various news organizations. However, at this newspaper, self-criticism or self-evaluation emerged as a unique, underlying element throughout the decision-making processes. While our study confirmed recent findings on news routines showing that gatekeeping has become more of a group process rather than an individual one, this newspaper had unusually democratic system. In fact, the newspaper's chief editor employed a team approach, allowing all editors and even reporters to offer their opinions on news judgment and decisions.

Another unexpected finding of our study was the constant use of "gallows" humor in editorial meetings, presumably to maintain camaraderie, cope with stress and to mollify disheartening topics. We studied the newspaper at one of the most emotional and reactive times in recent United States history, the aftermath of the World Trade Center and Pentagon bombings. This certainly was a factor in our results; however, because news occurs on a continuous, unpredictable cycle, we speculate similar results could possibly occur at other times. This use of humor allowed editors to deal emotionally with stories that otherwise might be overwhelmingly depressing.

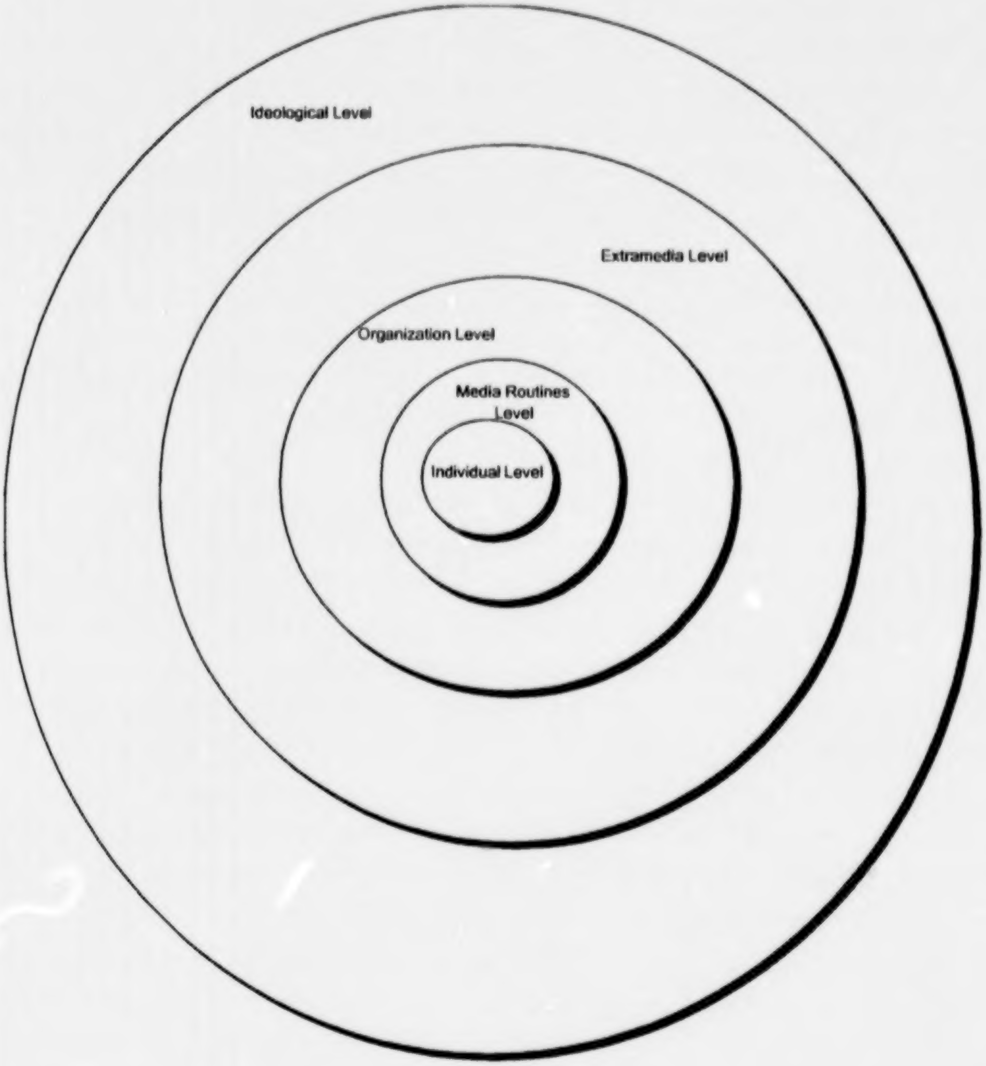
Future newsroom studies of the decision-making process could expand on our findings by focusing on other gatekeeping levels within news organizations, such as the newsgathering and reporting process. Observation could be supplemented by interviews of key newsroom personnel and/or textual or content analysis of published material. Research should continue to elaborate on how news is socially constructed, or, in other words, "made."

Appendix I
Editors Observed: Their Titles and Duties

1—Executive editor, in charge of entire newspaper. White male.
2—Editor of Web page. White male.
3—Education editor, in charge of local and higher education reporters. White male.
4—City editor, in charge of reporters who cover longer, local stories. White female.
5—Graphics editor, in charge of artist who compose graphics to accompany stories. White male.
6—City editor, in charge of local government reporters. White male.
7—Layout editor, in charge of story, photo, headline and caption placement. White male.
8—City editor, in charge of local news reporters. Black female.
9—Student photo editor, makes decisions on photo assignments. White female.
10—Assistant photo editor, makes decisions on photo assignments. White female.
11—City editor, in charge of local news reporters. White male.
12—City editor, in charge of local news reporters. White male.
13—Assistant photo editor, makes decisions on photo assignments. White male.
14—Photo editor, makes decisions on photo assignments. White male.
15—Layout and design editor, in charge of story, photo, headline and caption placement. White female.
16—Student assistant photo editor. White female.
17—Student assistant photo editor. White male.
18—Student editor. White female.
19—Library employee. White male.
20—Library chief, in charge of research and references. White female.
21—Student copy desk student editor, in charge of proofreading and clarifying stories, writing headlines. White male.
22—Student copy desk editor, in charge of proofreading and clarifying stories, writing headlines. White male.
23—Copy desk editor, in charge of proofreading and clarifying stories, writing headlines. White female.
24—Student wire editor, in charge of surveying wire services for important state, national and international stories. White male.
25—Student editor. White female.
26—Senior news editor. White female.
27—Student editor. White female.
28—Student wire editor. White female.

Appendix II

The graph demonstrates influences of media routines on media content in the hierarchical model (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996).



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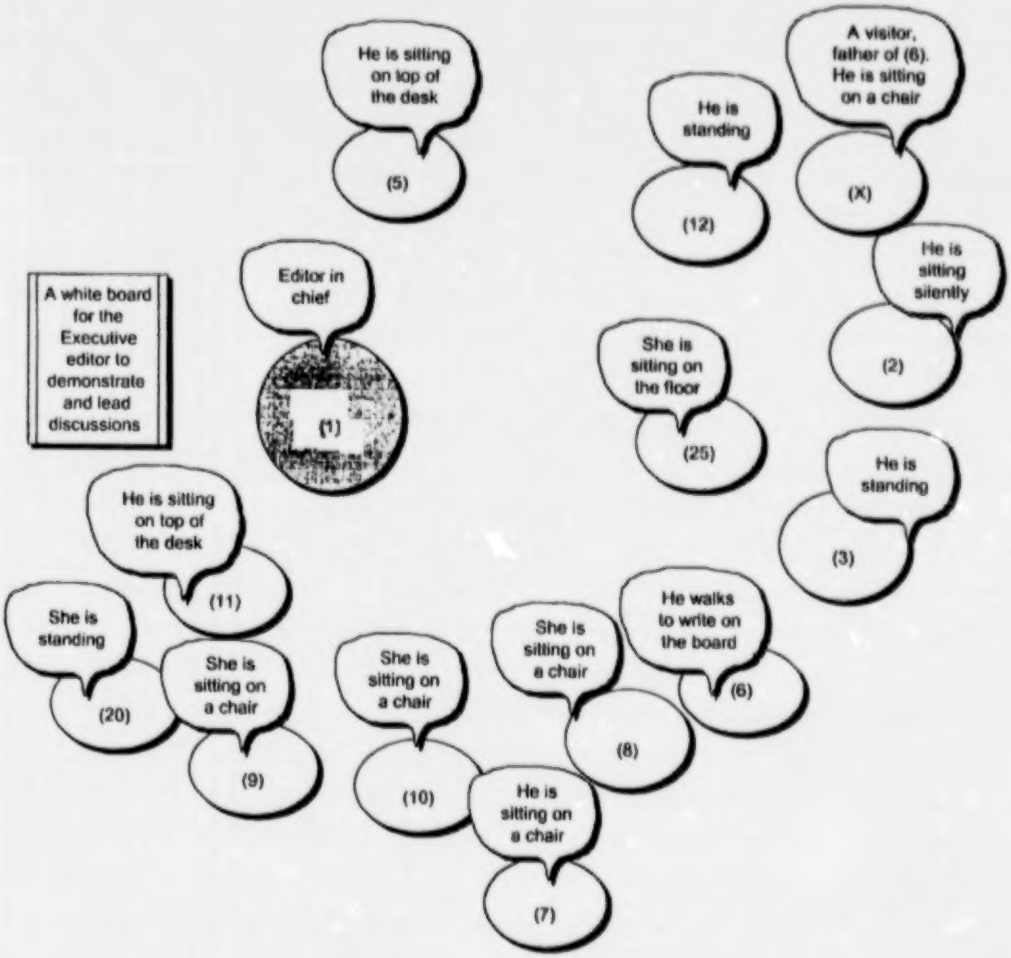
Appendix III
Budget Meeting in the Newsroom


He is sitting on top of the desk
(5)
He is standing
(12)
A visitor, father of (6). He is sitting on a chair
(X)
A white board for the Executive editor to demonstrate and lead discussions
Editor in chief
(1)
He is sitting silently
(2)
She is sitting on the floor
(25)
He is standing
(3)
He is sitting on top of the desk
(11)
She is standing
(20)
She is sitting on a chair
(9)
She is sitting on a chair
(10)
She is sitting on a chair
(8)
He walks to write on the board
(6)
He is sitting on a chair
(7)

News meeting – Observation (1)
Friday, Oct. 5, 2001 (11 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.)

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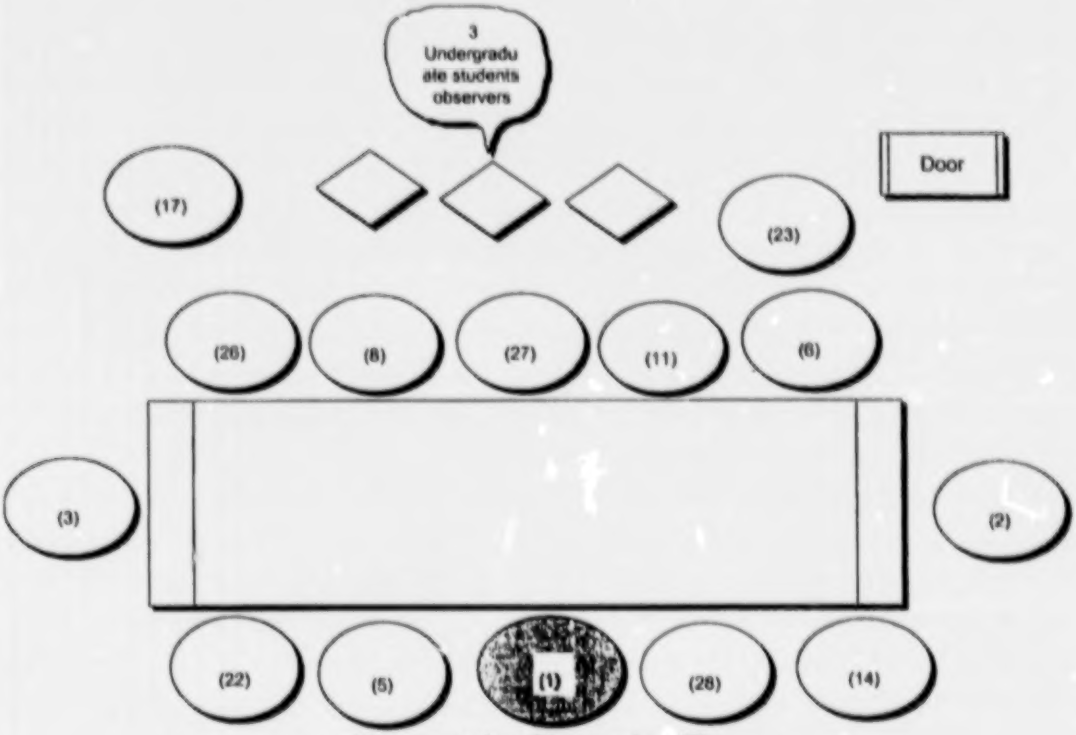
Appendix IV
Budget Meeting In Editorial Office Space



News meeting Observation (2)
Monday, Oct. 8, 2001 (3 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.)

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"PORTRAITS OF GRIEF," REFLECTORS OF VALUES:

THE *NEW YORK TIMES* REMEMBERS VICTIMS OF SEPTEMBER 11

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"PORTRAITS OF GRIEF," REFLECTORS OF VALUES:
THE *NEW YORK TIMES* REMEMBERS VICTIMS OF SEPTEMBER 11

In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, the *New York Times* began publishing a remarkable series of "Portraits of Grief," small sketches commemorating the lives of individuals lost in the terrorist attacks. Those involved were quick to note that the portraits were not typical obituaries or profiles. In fact, as *New York Times* reporter Barbara Stewart explained in *Columbia Journalism Review,* the portraits "skip most items required in standard obituaries: survivors, lists of colleges, degrees earned, jobs held, descriptions of newsworthy accomplishments."[1] Rather, she called the portraits, "impressionistic sketches, or as one of the metropolitan editors who created them says, 'little jewels.' Like a quick caricature that captures a likeness, they are intimate tales that give an impression, an image of a person."[2] The portraits began running only four days after the World Trade Center collapse and continued as a regular feature until 31 December 2001, when the newspaper suspended their daily publication but promised to continue them sporadically. Response to the portraits was swift and strong, according to published accounts.[3] *New York Times* Metro Editor Jon Landman, quoted in *The New Yorker,* said: "Nobody involved in this had any idea early on that this would turn into some kind of national shrine."[4]

Perhaps they should have known. Scholars have long observed the power of death stories. Joseph A. Amato argues that death "causes people to tell stories" that can be "shaped by moral judgment, fashioned for the sake of argument, made buoyant by metaphor, or given meaning by the rituals of culture and the promise of religion."[5] Death stories are provocative, and they resonate with people because of their strong connection with cultural and religious rituals. Newspapers have long provided a public place to tell stories of the deaths of individuals, legitimizing those stories for a mass audience. Such publicly shared "death stories" make individual and generational memories an element of public consciousness.[6] Janice Hume notes, too, in her historical study *Obituaries and American Culture,* the power of such stories: "An obituary distills the essence of a citizen's life, and because it is a commemoration as well as a life chronicle, it reflects what society values and wants to remember about that person's history."[7] Thus the systematic examination of obituaries can provide a useful tool to explore the values of Americans of any era. And such an examination can help in understanding an important aspect of American culture, the public memory of its citizens.

This study examines the "Portraits of Grief "as commemorations more than chronicles, as reflectors of values and memory at what may prove to be a significant turning point in American history. It argues that, although they are not typical obituaries, these portraits serve the same cultural function, publishing for public consumption the value of individual lives. Thus, building on the theoretical foundation of Hume's *Obituaries in American Culture,* this study seeks to answer the question: How were the lives of individuals who died in the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 commemorated in the *New York Times* "Portraits of Grief"?

CULTURAL VOICE

Though on the surface a simple news story, the obituary has a resounding cultural voice. Beyond identifying the deceased, giving a "cause of death" and sometimes telling readers details of a funeral, it offers a tiny picture of a life, a synopsis of what is best remembered about a person's history. It is a type of *commemoration*, representing an ideal, and because it is published or broadcast, that "ideal" is magnified for a mass audience.

Of course, not everyone who dies gets an obituary, and not every attribute is included for those remembered. The obituary "ideal" filters through a variety of screens, both cultural and journalistic. Thus, obituary pages do not offer a clear and accurate reflection of society. They cannot even be counted on to provide a complete representation of the deaths of any given day. But they provide something more interesting, a small window through which to view and better understand social values and power structures. [8]

According to those involved in writing and publishing the Portraits of Grief, the *New York Times* made a real effort to include as many of those who died in the terrorist attacks as possible. Most information was gathered through telephone interviews with family members and friends of the deceased. Stewart said: "Though a few people have not wanted a profile or have been too upset to be interviewed, the majority have been eager to talk about the people they loved."[9] She also notes that while the portraits were "meant to be accurate, they are clearly not objective."[10] Like obituaries, then, these portraits will provide a fascinating glimpse into social values in the days and months following the attacks, a tragic and anxious time for New York and the United States.

OBITUARIES IN HISTORY

Obituaries have been part of American newspapers since colonial times. Hume, who read more than 8,000 published between 1818 and 1930 in a variety of national and regional daily newspapers, argues that examining obituaries over time shows an American society slowly becoming more inclusive. Such an examination reveals other cultural changes as well, she wrote, in American attitudes about dying, about religion, about patriotism, about industry and wealth and about the way individual lives are valued in a society that supposedly embraces egalitarianism.[11] Obits link everyday citizens with the American past by telling stories of relationships between the deceased and icons such as George Washington, Daniel Boone, or Wild Bill Hickock.[12] Indeed, Hume notes that publication of an obituary in the mainstream mass media constitutes a rare instance in a democracy when an average person can become part of collective thought, part of what Americans might believe in common about the worth of a life.[13] The *New York Times* "Portraits of Grief," like traditional obituaries, have a powerful .cultural voice, reflect values of a city in grief and crisis, and will add to public memory of this national tragedy. It might be argued that they are the first institutionalized commemoration of this historic event.

PUBLIC WORTH AND MEMORY

Like obituaries, the "Portraits of Grief," could even contribute to the well being of American society by highlighting the importance of its individual members. [14] Though derived from the Latin *obitus*, meaning "death," an obituary actually is more about life, and the traits and actions remembered would become part of collective consciousness. Thus, these published portraits should be studied in light of their relationship with the collective, or public, memory -- that "body of beliefs about the past that help a public or society understand both its past and its present, and, by implication, its future."[15] Hume's study specifically links memories of the lives of individual citizens to collective national thought. Why is an obituary link so important? Barry Schwartz calls for an understanding of two distinct aspects of remembering -- chronicling and commemoration. He wrote:

> Our memory of the past is preserved mainly by means of chronicling, the direct recording of events and their sequence. However the events selected for chronicling are not all evaluated in the same way. To some of these events we remain morally indifferent; other events are commemorated, i.e., invested with an extraordinary significance and assigned a qualitatively distinct place in our conception of the past... Commemoration celebrates and safeguards the ideal.[16]

An obituary distills, publishes and thus legitimizes something more abstract than mere facts. It reveals values as well, highlighted in the attributes of the deceased, and should be examined not just as an indifferent chronicle but as a commemoration, a representation of an ideal, with its own distinct contribution to our understanding of history. Those ideals, part of obituary coverage, become safeguarded by their publication.

Memory is vital to the survival of both individuals and societies, and the needs of both can influence the very substance of what is remembered. Psychologist Alan D. Baddeley has written about the "context-dependency" effect on individual memory, meaning that memory often is dictated by a person's current circumstance. He says that people are more likely to remember the information that is relevant to their situation rather than to some distant setting or situation.[17] Societies, too, have the capacity to "remember" and "forget," and collective social memories also are based on current needs. The Portraits of Grief should not only reveal something about what society remembers about the deceased, but also offer hints into what may have been "forgotten" about the attributes and values associated with individual lives.

As Paul Connerton argues in *How Societies Remember*, images of the past often legitimate a current social order.[18] Obituaries and Portraits of Grief would legitimize a "worth," a socially agreed-upon notion of what is important in a life. "It is an implicit rule," he writes, "that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory."[19] These publicly shared accounts of individual lives would add to society's shared memory and agreed-upon values as well as reflect individual citizens' adherence to a social norm. Thus, an obituary would tend to ignore deviant behavior or attributes that were socially unacceptable. Shared knowledge or memory, according to Geoffrey Hartman, is an "important yet often unconscious influence on personal identity,"[20] so collective values might naturally influence what is commemorated of the lives of individuals, those values stressed, those attributes and actions highlighted and recounted. A newspaper obituary, or a Portrait of Grief, might highlight the uniqueness of an individual or that uniqueness might be subsumed by the needs and values of the collective society.

What about the historical "accuracy" of an obituary as a reflector of an individual life? If it serves to "commemorate" rather than "chronicle," the obituary might seem an unworthy source for scholarly research. Historians, for example, are typically concerned with finding out what actually happened rather than what was published in a newspaper. But Lowenthal warns scholars of the importance of understanding "the screens through which historical information and ideas are commonly filtered."[21] The obituary / portrait is a type of screen, providing facts and values filtered by the media and by families of the deceased. As Halbwachs writes: "Since a past fact is instructive and a person who has disappeared is an encouragement or an advertisement, what we call the framework of memory is also a concatenation of ideas and judgments."[22] An obituary, then, would serve to preserve for posterity some of those "ideas and judgments" that often are so elusive for historians and chroniclers of values and culture.

THE MEDIA'S ROLE

Media are the primary influence on the way a culture builds its memory, according to Huyssen, and are the "hidden veil" through which cultural memory and structures of temporality can be viewed.[23] And the media have certain conventions which affect content. For example, modern obituary writers deal with economic problems of space, and often must nail the virtues of a persons's life briefly. It follows, then, that this news convention would have an impact on what is publicly remembered about individual lives. Indeed, the Portraits of Grief typically were no longer than 300 words, and employed a number of other journalistic conventions, as well, recounted by Roy Peter Clark, including: "a lead that captures a sense of character;" details; quotations; foreshadowing; certain themes of coverage; and "tiny flourishes of style" by writers.[24]

American newspapers, notes sociologist Michael Schudson, "are today the most representative carrier and construer and creator of modern public consciousness."[25] And news stories of all kinds -- whether about political crises or the deaths of individual citizens -- use symbols to hold readers' interest. W. Lloyd Warner in *The Living and the Dead: A Study of the Symbolic Life of Americans* writes that newspapers include "evocative, non-logical symbols rather than logical, empirical ones "representing the "non-logical symbolic beliefs and folk symbols of people who buy the papers."[26] Newspaper obituaries, which carry to the public consciousness those powerful, symbolic death stories, must have at least a small role in influencing collective thought.

A public memory that can be distorted by the mass media might also be manipulated. John R. Gillis argues that such memory is not a fixed thing, but merely a representation or subjective construction of reality.[27] And Bodnar writes that public memory is political, involving social organization, structure of power and the very meaning of a society's past and present."[28] Mainstream newspapers, which must appeal to the masses to survive, tend to publish obituaries that reflect the cultural "construction" of the dominant society. But because each obituary is, by definition, the memory of a singular life, it must offer at least something of the individual citizen. The obituary thus offers a glimpse into the complex relationship between an individual and his or her society.

MEDIA FRAMES

The "Portraits of Grief" might actually help distribute a type of ideology to their mass audience. Framing theory helps scholars understand how that distribution would work. For example, Todd Gitlin argues that the media "specialize in orchestrating everyday consciousness -- by virtue of their pervasiveness, their accessibility, their centralized symbolic capacity...the mass media produce fields of definition and association, symbol and rhetoric, through which ideology becomes manifest and concrete."[29] He defines frames as "principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of little tacit theories about what exists, what happens and what matters."[30] Robert M. Entman, in his 1993 "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," calls for more scholarly attention to framing theory. He argues that media frames, selections of aspects of a perceived reality, promote particular definitions, interpretations and moral evaluations.[31] Studying, as Entman notes, the "keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments"[32] in these portraits might reveal something of values and moral evaluations following this unusual moment in history. Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki explain framing as an approach to news discourse. Building on the theories in Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis*,[33] they conceive of news discourse as a "sociocognitive process" involving "sources, journalists and audience members operating in the universe of shared culture on the basis of socially defined roles."[34] Because of this relationship between news framing and shared culture, the presentation of any type of news story, including a news obituary or "Portrait of Grief," is intrinsically linked to memory, culture and collective meaning.

METHODS

This study examines 427 Portraits of Grief published in *The New York Times* between 15 September 2001 and 31 December 2001. This sample was drawn from the newspaper's Website, including every fifth portrait published on each day as indicated in daily indexes on the site. Analysis focuses primarily on one of four framing categories of newspaper obituaries, the personal attributes of the deceased. (The remaining three categories Hume used in her study -- name and occupation of the deceased; cause of death; and funeral arrangements -- offer less information in the Portraits of Grief, due to the unique nature of the deaths and the portraits.) Though some percentages will be reported, this is not a quantitative content analysis, but an attempt to examine these primary sources for both content and context to understand something of American cultural values. For example, personal attributes, even virtues, of the deceased reflect ideas about what American society values about lives of Americans. Each attribute listed, particularly if the same is used multiple times, indicates a type of promotion of social ideology through framing.

Five major themes, or categories, emerged in these 427 portraits, as well as a number of threads that were less significant in terms of percentages but provide some cultural insight. The major themes included: devotion to family; passion, talent or interests outside work; a work ethic; positive human qualities; and good health or energy.

THE PORTRAITS

In the sample of 427 Portraits of Grief examined for this study, 349 or 82 percent were of men and 78, or 18 percent, were of women. Occupations of the deceased were naturally reflective of jobs housed within the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center, of those who might have had cause to be in the buildings on the morning of September 11, and of police and firefighters who arrived at the disaster site to help and were killed in action. A few of the portraits, too, were of those who died in the three planes hijacked in the attack, though none were of individuals who perished at the Pentagon. In addition to emergency service providers, such occupations included brokers, traders, risk management specialists, insurance executives, numerous corporate vice presidents and other officers, accountants, human resources specialists, chefs, government workers, clerical workers, engineers, computer specialists, mechanics, a sculptor, a wine master, photographer, waitress, retired geography professor, maintenance worker, and, ironically, fire and building safety directors. Thus, these portraits, for the most part, focus on an educated, elite, rather than a true cross-section of New York society. Causes of death were implied, rather than stated, the word "died" seldom used and funeral arrangements rarely mentioned, likely because most of the bodies had not been recovered.

DEVOTION TO FAMILY

Devotion to family was by far the attribute most often featured in the sample of Portraits of Grief examined for this study, a number likely influenced by the fact that family members were the sources most often used. Eighty-two percent of men and 72 percent of women were remembered for familial associations. And rather than listing family simply as "survivors," as do so many traditional modern obituaries, these portraits included much more active and social connections between the deceased and spouses, children, parents, grandchildren, grandparents, nieces, nephews and cousins.

Relationships between parents and children were vividly portrayed. The men coached and cheered their children's soccer, track and football teams and attended dance recitals; rode horseback or motorcycles with children; or simply took weekend drives or shopped with them for groceries.[35] Women, too, cheered at their children's athletic events, took bicycle rides and trips, attended concerts, played games, dressed up for Halloween with the kids, and participated in school activities.[36] John Patrick Gallagher played hookey from work on the Friday before his death "so he could treat his wife, Francine, and 2-month-old son, James Jordan, to a day at the Bronx Zoo."[37] Venesha Richards "couldn't wait" to see her daughter's first step.[38] Firefighter Raymond York "was a Little League coach, he was a scout leader -- when it came to his kids, he was there for everything."[39]

Many portraits focused on the bond between the deceased and wives or husbands, often reminiscing about the earliest moments of the relationships. For example, more than forty of the male portraits and 12 of the female ones presented nostalgic snapshots of how the couples met, one in a Staten Island pub, another on the subway, one at Macy's, another at a university alumni meeting, or on a hiking trail in New Hampshire, or when he cut in front of her in a line.[40] These meetings often had a fairy-tale quality about them, as when David G. Carlone announced on their first date that we would marry his wife Beverly.[41] And the idyllic unions continued, as did Joshua Aron's. An equities trader, he often sent love notes to his wife by instant messenger.[42] Noel J. Foster and his wife Nancy were "extremely in love," and had just celebrated their tenth wedding anniversary.[43] Donald H. Gregory, 62, kissed his wife at the start and end of each day.[44] Indeed, the social value of the ties between husband and wife, parent and child were so strong that some portraits even bestowed them on single people. Gerard P. Dewing, for example, had always planned to have children, and found a substitute home and family after renting the basement apartment of friends.[45] Michael Tarrou had never asked his fiancé to marry him, but his portrait assured readers: "No one doubts that would have happened."

Other family relationships were important, too, and highlighted in multiple portraits. For example, Ysidro Hidalgo Tejada cooked dinners for his extended family and cared for his 90-year-old diabetic mother.[46] Michelle L. Titolo sipped afternoon tea with her sister. [47] One corporate vice president installed a garage door opener for his sister, another organized multi-generation "tomatofests" when the extended family gathered to can enough tomatoes to last the winter.[48] Giovanna Poras was "like a second mother to her nephews,"[49] and Manny DelValle Jr. "was the one in the family who always sent a card and gift to siblings, half-siblings and cousins."[50]

Yet the portraits often hinted at how difficult it was for these mostly professional, white-collar men and women to find time for such strong familial relationships. Often the portraits would point out how the deceased "managed to find time" to come home, or perhaps had taken a less-demanding job for family reasons, as did one engineer who "had carved out a 'Father Knows Best' kind of life, with him coming home at six every evening, choosing to know his family well rather than to work longer hours for more money."[51] One father sent his children online messages from work, because he left home before they got up for school; another would juggle his schedule, eating lunch with his family if he had a dinner meeting.[52] The article quoted his wife: "I think it was shocking to his clients who would call to find out that he was gone for an hour but he would be back from reading in his daughter's class." A few pointed regretfully to missed opportunities with families, but always ended on a positive note.[53] Indeed, most of these portraits made clear that family was a priority, even for a successful corporate executive. Tom Burke, remembered as the "quintessential Wall Street man," exemplified this trait:

> He was successful, but that's not what made him happiest," said his sister, Nancy Salter. "It was his family." That was the part the young guns did not see, the part not learned in college. Tom Burke's mother always had a happy birthday. Tom Burke's family never wondered where Daddy was. Tom Burke's friends never lay sick, alone.[54]

PASSION...OUTSIDE WORK

In addition to strong family relationships, terrorist attack victims featured in the Portraits of Grief were remembered for having passions, talents or interests outside the office, including 50 percent of the men and 46 percent of the women.

For the men, the most oft-listed interests were sports, particularly the New York professional teams, and world travel. For the women, travel topped the list. For example, travel for one woman was a "yearly ritual: pick a part of the world and explore it."[55] Another man would "every year grab his passport and head as far as is savings would take him – Spain, Italy, Nice, Monaco, Ireland."[56] Both the men and women were remembered for engaging in all kinds of physical activities, both indoor and outdoor. The most popular of these for the men were golf, fishing, hunting, skiing, sailing, scuba, dancing, and cycling, but devotion to numerous other physical activities was remembered, too, from Karate to snowboarding, bowling to soccer. The women, too, rode horseback, skied, hiked and kayaked. Food and cooking, theater, music and movies were popular passions listed in the portraits for both genders, as were shopping and gardening or home improvement. Susan L. Schuler, for example, had "transformed her standard-issue, quarter-acre backyard in Allentown, N.J., into a dazzling botanical paradise."[57] And though memberships typically were not remembered in these portraits, a number of men and women were noted for church affiliations and for religious faith.

Other passions recounted, too, indicate that those who were killed in the terrorist attacks were active and engaged. They were artists, or craftswomen, readers, writers, chefs, history buffs, amateur photographers and carpenters. One man loved bull riding.[58] Another was "nutty over lighthouses."[59] Still another loved inventing, and had "built 40 fully functioning crossbows, most of them patented."[60] The men were passionate about cars, particularly red ones, and both men and women loved their motorcycles.[61] Most of these passions were listed simply, letting the regret over the lost life remain implied rather than stated. However, occasionally, a portrait would note the loss, as did the one for Susan M. Getzendanner, a corporate vice president. It said:

> Ms. Getzendanner, 58, had a great grin, and silver-gray hair that she never dyed. She lived on the Upper East Side and worked behind the scenes for the Blue Hill Troupe, an amateur group of Gilbert and Sullivan players. On weekends, she went to her cottage at the foot of Mount Riga in Connecticut, which, like her apartment, was filled with handicrafts and art from her travels. Her brother Tom Getzendanner lamented the fact that a woman who spent her life traveling foreign lands and trusting others was killed in an act of international terrorism. [62]

WORK ETHIC

Despite the numerous passions for, or interests in, activities outside the office, individuals commemorated in this sample of *New York Times* Portraits of Grief had a strong work ethic. This attribute was remembered in 46 percent of the women and 43 percent of the men, and in fact, only one of the 427 portraits examined for this study admitted that the deceased did not enjoy his work, (but it was quick to note he enjoyed his life.)[63] Indeed, "loved" was the descriptor most often used when explaining how the deceased felt about their jobs. Many were remembered for how early they would get to the office and how late they would stay. "Peggy Alario's Bronco was always the first one in the commuter lot and the last out," her portrait noted.[64] Gary Shamay was often at work by 5:30 a.m., and Denise Elizabeth Crant would arrive at

6:30 and "then she would leave a voice-mail message for her brother, teasing him about his 'bankers hours.'"[65] Giving 100 percent at work was not enough. One trader gave 150 percent; a firefighter, 300 percent.[66] Others were noted for their hard work, persistence, dedication, innovation, success, skill, responsibility, self reliance, industry, determination, ambition and drive. They were hard-driving, go-getters who worked full-throttle at careers that were exciting and fulfilling. For bond trader Patrick J. Bushsie, "the yelling, screaming, posturing and power plays of the trading floor" were "his idea of nirvana."[67] For Edelmiro Abad, a senior vice president, "The company was a second home... and its staff another family."[68] And the building they worked in was special, too. Charles Henry Karczewski "loved 'that stupid trade center,'" according to his wife. His portrait said: "Every time they drove by the buildings, he would say, "I work there.'"[69]

Firefighters and immigrants particularly were noted for dedication to their jobs. For example, many firefighters were remembered for volunteering to work at different stations when off duty from their main assignments. One had just returned to work, " a tremendous victory," after a long, difficult recuperation from burns suffered on the job.[70] Another did everything "over the top," and another "loved even the unromantic parts of the job, like fire inspections."[71] When it came to firefighting, Thomas Foley "said it was the best job in the world and he would never give it up."[72] Immigrants were remembered for their difficult climb, for holding several jobs at once, and for the pride, even joy, they took in their work.[73] For example, Lucille Francis, who moved to the United States from Barbados in 1986, "took immense pride in polishing the brass and vacuuming the much-trod carpets of Windows on the World on the 107th floor of 1 World Trade Center. She always insisted that her rooms be as perfect as the view."[74] Manuel Asitimbay, an immigrant from Ecuador and proud cook at Windows on the World, "took such joy in the food he prepared."[75]

POSITIVE HUMAN QUALITIES

Working long hours was a valued quality among those who perished in the terrorist attacks, but according to their Portraits of Grief, greed was not the reason for all that work. Forty-five percent of men and 35 percent of women were remembered for positive human qualities, including generosity. As the portrait for Patrick Buhse said: "What he liked even better than amassing money was giving it away."[76] Trader Scott McGovern had "silent charities," and was a "secret santa" for the son of a struggling single mother who did not know his identity until after his death.[77] One man "kept extra winter jackets in his Jeep in case he spotted a shivering homeless person."[78] Sometimes even family members learned of generous acts only after September 11. "Strangers who did now know his [firefighter Michael Paul Ragusa's] name came by with fruit baskets to tell of how he helped fix their fences or change their tires."[79] Indeed, firefighters especially were remembered for generosity, as was Fred Ill Jr., who not only saved a man's life in a subway accident, but "later stayed nearby as the man learned to walk on artificial legs, and he helped to find scholarships for the man's children."[80]

Yet even more prevalent than generosity in these portraits was sense of humor. Again and again, men and women were remembered for making others laugh, as did Charles Austin McCrann, a levelheaded and respected executive who "would surprise someone taken in by his straight appearance with a funny duck walk as he left the room."[81] Brothers John Vigiano and Joseph Vigiano "hatched pranks that were wicked in their creativity but gentle in their impact."[82] Individuals, too, were often remembered for distinctive laughs, for smiling, and for loving life, as was Moises Rives, who "imbibed life in big gulps."[83] The deceased were loyal, friendly, nice, kind, thoughtful, fun, decent, solid, trustworthy, optimistic, honorable, honest, genial, graceful, playful, respectful, warm, easy going, tolerant fair and positive. Both men and women were remembered for being gentle and sweet and for having big hearts.

GOOD HEALTH OR ENERGY

Perhaps because many of the victims of September 11 were so young they were remembered for good health and energy, including 16 percent of the men and 18 percent of the women. They were runners who participated in races or marathons.[84] Many were remembered simply for working out, for eating right or being physically fit. Joseph V. Maggitti was "always a jock," and Donald Foreman was known for "playing basketball with kids young enough to be his grandchildren."[85] One Port Authority property manager was not content simply to climb 110 flights of stairs during his lunch-hour fitness routine. "That would be wimpy. Instead, he would go all the way to the subbasement of the World Trade Center and begin his climb there. And it was also not enough to simply climb to the top. He would descend the stairs as well."[86] The deceased had energy, were natural athletes, and were strong, like Vanesha Richards, "a one-woman power plant."[87] The portraits reflect shock that such lives were taken so suddenly. As one grieving father said of his son: "We don't have anything but an urn... He was a bundle of energy, and now there is no energy."[88]

CULTURAL THREADS

Several other themes appeared in these 427 Portraits of Grief which were not significant enough in numbers to warrant a major category, but that offer some insight into cultural values nonetheless. One was home ownership, mentioned in 29 of the portraits. Home was a sanctuary, fixing it up a hobby, entertaining in it a pleasure. "It's our dream house," one widow said.[89] Another theme was bravery, mentioned in 36 of the male obituaries, often in reference to firefighters, police officers and other rescue workers, most of whom were believed to have rushed into the burning buildings, or raced to work as soon as the alarm sounded.[90] But it was not just rescue workers who were noted for bravery. One engineer was last seen making sure no one was left behind in his office on the 64th floor; a hotel executive calmly helped with the evacuation and then was trapped with two injured firefighters. [91] These men were not remembered as victims. Barry J. McKeon, who worked for Fiduciary Trust International, for example, surely died while helping others. Said his best friend: "I'm totally convinced if Barry had thought of himself on Sept. 11, he'd still be alive... If he saw someone struggling, he'd be the last one out."[92] Another theme was love of pets, remembered in fewer portraits but with vivid detail, often describing the pets as children. For example, Frankie Serrano was remembered for spoiling his 109-pound Neopolitan mastiff. His girlfriend said: "All the toys he bought him, you can't imagine. It was like his child."[93]

Several portraits dealt with coincidence and mysticism surrounding the deaths: a fortuitous phone call made to a mother, not on the regular day; a man known in his basketball-playing youth as a Twin Tower; a premonition in the form of a sleepless night; a recent love letter from someone not known for such sentiment.[94] One man labored for decades over filling and labeling photo albums. "The last photo he ever entered... was one of him in a helicopter flying over Lower Manhattan, staring at the World Trade Center."[95]

Finally, twenty-nine of the portraits mentioned idiosyncracies about the deceased, qualities that might once have annoyed family members, co-workers and friends. Yet because the portraits were not meant to be objective, and because commemorations are by nature flattering, these qualities were presented in positive, almost bemused ways, as quirks. One man changed clothes a lot; another chatted with toll booth operators (much to his children's dismay); another was so quiet his wife once asked if he was in the witness protection program. [96] One woman was a perfectionist who "often cleaned. Every last spot of dirt."[97] One man's friends called him "Prozac," because "sometimes he needed to calm down a little."[98] Another man beat up his future wife's boyfriend "and took her. Caveman-like, pretty much."[99] Another had a "parade of girlfriends" paying condolence calls, each wearing one of his firehouse T-shirts. His mother said: "They all think they're the only one that has one... I'm dying the whole visit, hoping another one doesn't show up at the same time."[100] Such traits were presented with humor by family members or friends who wanted to remember the deceased not as saints, but as human beings.

CONCLUSION

The 427 *New York Times* Portraits of Grief examined for this study do offer an opportunity to study cultural values and public memory at a significant and tragic moment in American history. And though they are not typical "obituaries," they have similar cultural power because they are "commemorations" more than chronicles, vested with extraordinary significance. They are also death stories that fascinate and resonate in a society. Over and over again, these portraits offered up for their mass audience a cultural ideal, legitimizing the value of the lives of individual Americans. The victims of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 were, first-and-foremost, good and loving parents, spouses and family members. However difficult it was to find time to attend a child's athletic event, or help a sibling, or check in with a parent, they did it. The deceased were remembered for their good humor, for laughter and generosity, and for being hard workers with high-powered, exciting careers. In short, they loved their jobs. They were also healthy and energetic, many of them brave. These portraits, not objective by design, were almost reverent in the treatment of the deceased and in the treatment of the buildings themselves, the former Twin Towers of the World Trade Center. There was a mystic air about the deaths, with the word "died" seldom used, almost always implied.

These portraits, too, offer scholars and historians glimpses into the tensions between dominant cultural values. These New Yorkers struggled mightily to juggle their work and family ethics, their passion for life with their responsibilities. Time became the metaphor. Many obituaries spoke of families waiting for Mom or Dad to get home at a particular time, of children who were tucked in at night by a working parent and how special that daily moment was. Many portraits spoke of precious time spent with husbands or wives. In fact the value of marriage and parenthood was so strong that even single people were remembered for spouses they might have married, children they might have had. The value of kindness and humor was so dominant that even personality idiosyncracies were remembered with kindness and humor. No matter what major value -- family, outside interests, work, human qualities and health/energy -- these portraits remembered activity. These individuals were always on the move, whether working or traveling or even performing acts of kindness. There was an electricity about them. Above all, then, the lives in these Portraits of Grief were remembered for being extinguished too soon.

It is important to think about what and who are "forgotten" when examining obituary pages. It seems the *New York Times* reporters and editors attempted to commemorate as many victims as they could find, so inclusion was not an issue. Any person, from illegal immigrant to corporate vice president, was worthy of a portrait if they perished on September 11 and the reporters were able to gather enough information for publication. However, not every attribute for those included was remembered. There was no room for greed, or impatience, or laziness, or weakness or fear in those mostly young Americans whose lives were taken. Only the rarest of portraits indicated any kind of sadness in the deceased's life. In fact, these individuals were noted for loving life and for living it abundantly. The historical "accuracy" of these portraits is not as important as their cultural function. Hume argues that obituaries contribute to the well being of society by strengthening it collectively and by highlighting the importance of its individual members. The Portraits of Grief might be even more powerful. Michael Kammen notes that national memories are more likely to be "activated and strengthened by conflict and the desire for reconciliation," which certainly was the mood of New York and the nation in the uncertain weeks following September 11.[101] Each lost life, then, would become instructive, each shared memory perhaps an unconscious influence on personal identities of those who read and shared the published portraits.

This study offers only the tiniest cultural glimpse. The portraits were written and edited by roughly a hundred journalists at one mainstream newspaper and so are not representative of all of America. The deceased were not a cross section of the nation, or even of New York. Yet, their stories do reveal something of what the city and nation valued at a critical moment in history. Many memorials will honor the victims and heroes of September 11, many stories will be published and broadcast remembering those who were lost. But these Portraits of Grief are important because they were among the first public commemorations of the thousands of people lost in the attacks. Safeguarded by their publication they will continue to comfort as well as enlighten those who were left behind.

ENDNOTES

1. Barbara Stewart, "Amid So Much Death, Celebrations of Life," *Columbia Journalism Review* (January/February 2002): 66.

2. Ibid.

3. See, "Amid So Much Death;" Janny Scott, Closing a Scrapbook Full of Life and Sorrow," *The New York Times* (31 December 2001): 6-B; Roy Peter Clark, "Portraits of

Grief," on the website of the Poynter Institute <http://www.poynter.org> (4 February 2002).

4.Mark Singer, "The Grief Desk," *The New Yorker* (14 January 2002).

5. Joseph A. Amato, "Death and the Stories We Don't Have," *The Monist* 76:2 (April 1993), 259.

6. Janice Hume, *Obituaries in American Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000): 12.

7. Ibid., 14.

8. Ibid., 150.

9. Stewart, "Amid So Much Death," 67.

10. Ibid., 66.

11. Hume, *Obituaries*, 14.

12. Ibid., 150.

13. Ibid., 163.

14. Ibid., 150.

15.There are many fine discussions of public memory, including the classic work by Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991 reprint, 1941) on which many studies are based. This particular definition, a typical example, is from John Bodnar's, "Public Memory in an American City: Commemoration in Cleveland," in John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 76.

16.Barry Schwartz, "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory," *Social Forces* 6:2 (December 1982), 377.

17.Allen Baddeley, "The Psychology of Remembering and Forgetting," in *Memory: History, Culture and the Mind*, Thomas Butler, ed., (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 58.

18.Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 3.

19. Ibid.

20.Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Public Memory and Modern Experience," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 6:2 (1993), 239.

21. Ibid., 1264.

22. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 175-176.

23. Huyssen, *Twilight Memories*, 4-5.

24. Clark, "Portraits."

25. Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 37.

26. W. Lloyd Warner, *The Living and the Dead: A Study of the Symbolic Life of Americans* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 54-55.

27. John R. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship," in his edited *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.

28. John Bodnar, "Public Memory in an American City: Commemoration in Cleveland," in John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 75.

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Prepared for Crisis?

Breaking Coverage of September 11th on Newspaper Web Sites

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ABSTRACT

Prepared for Crisis?

Breaking Coverage of September 11th on Newspaper Web Sites

This study comprised a content analysis of newspaper Web site home pages captured live on the late morning and late afternoon of September 11th, 2001. While it focused on immediacy, it also examined editorial and visual elements, localizing and multimedia. Major findings were that 65 percent of the Web sites in the morning and 38 percent in the afternoon said nothing about the WTC attacks. Newspapers missed an opportunity to reassert their role as primary sources of unfolding information. Furthermore newspaper Web sites may have pushed information seekers to television and other media outlets.

Prepared for Crisis? Breaking Coverage of September 11th on Newspaper Web Sites

Since the shots were fired in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963, killing President John F. Kennedy, we have seen several major events that have redefined what news organizations do during times of crisis and how they get information to the public. The terrorist attack on the United States of September 11, 2001, is the most recent. Over the 38-year period that separates these two defining moments in American history, much has changed in the technologies of gathering, processing, presenting and disseminating news. With the changes has come an improvement in the speed in which journalists can gather information and in turn, news organizations can send information to audiences. Certainly, the Internet and the development of the World Wide Web have enabled newspapers to create Web sites that can compete with television and radio in the immediate and global dissemination of news and information. How newspaper Web sites reacted to the shocking events of Sept. 11 is the objective of this study.

In 1963, television changed its programming to provide immediate and continuous coverage of an historical moment. When President Kennedy was assassinated, television news was primarily a black and white medium, news events were shot on 16 mm film and "going live" was in its infancy. Americans were riveted to their television sets as non-stop coverage continued for three days.[1] Veteran journalist Edwin Newman[2] said in his introduction to a 25th anniversary rebroadcast of NBC's coverage, that this pivotal event demonstrated that the age of television news had arrived, that broadcast news "came of age" during the live, continuous coverage of the assassination and subsequent events.[3] People of that generation remember precisely where they were and what they were doing when they heard the news. They experienced the same sense of disbelief that most people felt when they first heard of the terrorist attack on Sept. 11. And, they recalled where they tuned for information.

A similar event, 17 years later, challenged media's ability to get needed information quickly to shocked Americans. On March 30, 1981, when President Reagan was shot outside a Washington D.C. hotel, the networks were broadcasting live from their studios only 20 minutes later. The nation was transfixed as ABC News rolled videotape of the shooting almost from the moment it went on the air. NBC and CBS showed videotape of the shooting within five minutes of going on the air. And, about one hour later, still images shot by the wire service photographers began appearing in television news reports. In the intervening years, from the assassination of President Kennedy to the attempted murder of President Reagan, color had replaced black and white, videotape had replaced film and the ability to have reporters give live reports with both sound and image had become a somewhat standard practice.[4]

January 17, 1991, and the start of the Gulf War provided another defining moment in the immediate delivery of news to a global audience. CNN (Cable News Network) had joined the giant networks in 1979. And, it was the underdog CNN that brought the Gulf War to not just the nation, but to the world, live and from behind enemy lines. Peter Arnett, Bernard Shaw and John Holliman continuously described the bombing of Baghdad on a four-wire live phone line as the bombs were falling. Americans had not experienced this level of immediacy and intimacy in the reporting of a conflict situation since Edward R. Murrow's famous radio reports from Europe enabled the networks to reach overseas.[5] It didn't matter to stunned Americans and other nations watching that CNN had to rely on canned headshots and maps when the "Boys of

Baghdad" couldn't send live images to accompany their reports from the field in their exclusive coverage of the first 17 hours of the bombing.[6]

In the decade between the Gulf War and the beginning of the War on Terrorism on Sept. 11, a new medium, the Internet, has shown its capabilities of also presenting news immediately and to a global audience.[7] On one hand, audience members can actively seek information on the Internet and do not have to wait until a television station or radio station can "go live." On the other hand, newspapers can now compete with television and radio to offer immediate news and information on the Internet. Thus, with this technology, all traditional media organizations have the technological ability to compete on a relatively level field.

The Internet is a unique channel of information that joins the best of traditional media—the credibility and depth of newspaper and magazine editorial and visual content; the authority and color of television's moving video; and the immediacy and reliability of radio's oral reports. Furthermore, the Internet has attributes beyond traditional media—hypertext, enabling one to access remote information; multimedia, bringing together text, graphics, video, animation and sound; interactivity, connecting people from different locations together through electronic mail and discussion groups; virtually limitless storage, providing vast amounts of information to readers; and world-wide accessibility, reaching more people simultaneously.

Crises in our recent history have challenged news organizations to immediately react with superlative efficacy, using the technology available to them. They reincarnated themselves and redefined what audiences can expect from news organizations in times of emergency. The assassination of President Kennedy moved network television to all-day coverage, the attempted murder of President Reagan had stations broadcasting "live" coverage within 30 minutes and the Gulf War changed the world-wide image of cable news forever with its immediate, on-the-spot reports. How will media critics summarize news organizations' coverage of the bombings on Sept. 11 given the Internet's capabilities? And, more specifically, how did newspaper organizations use the Internet's advantages to disseminate news immediately to readers?

Thus, the objective of this study was to find out how local and regional newspaper Web sites reacted to and covered the happenings of Sept. 11. How soon could online readers find out about breaking events? In what ways did the newspaper Web sites cover the bombings? And, how did newspaper Web sites use the World Wide Web to help readers make sense of the tragic day?

Literature Review

About 450 million people have access to the Internet globally and more than half that number are active Internet users.[8] In the United States alone the number of people online has increased rapidly: In 1995, about five million Americans had access to the Internet and four years later, ten times that many, about 50 million, were connected.[9] By March 2002, nearly 170 million Americans had access to the Internet and about 80 million were active users.[10]

While the Internet has experienced huge gains, local and network television stations and newspapers have suffered a decline. A decade ago, network newscasts drew 43 percent of 18- to 49-year-olds and in 2002 drew only 29 percent.[11] From 1995 to 1999, overall newspaper circulation decreased from 58 million to 56 million.[12]

Mass communication researchers Stempel, Hargrove and Bernt found that when people want news and information about issues and events happening in the world, they still turn regularly to the traditional media—television, radio and newspapers, and increasingly to the Internet.[13] Noting that media use and reliance is not the same thing,[14] Stempel and his colleagues speculated that Internet users are information-seekers who monitor radio news about a breaking event and turn to newspapers and the Internet for supplemental information. Headline news content from most local and national television news programs does not offer substantial coverage for information-seekers. For the most part, people move from television to other media for more information, not vice-versa.

The depth and authority of newspaper's coverage and the Internet's varied technological advantages of presenting and disseminating that information should attract information seekers. Newspapers' great strength is their ability to gather and organize information in ways useful to readers. Adding multimedia, interactivity, vast amounts of information and the immediate dissemination of news worldwide would exemplify newspaper Web sites as a leading source of information. By 1997, nearly every major metropolitan newspaper had a Web site.[15] Now, more than 4,500 newspapers worldwide have a presence on the Web.[16]

Only a handful of systematic studies have used content analysis to describe what newspapers offer on their Web sites. Other content analyses of Web sites, mostly conducted in 1996 and 1997, varied in their objectives (e.g., type of links, readability levels and banner content) and used sites that were not media oriented (i.e., business, biomedical and political). Still further supplementary research projects used content analysis to describe computer-mediated communication generally (i.e., discussion groups and e-mail).[17]

Content analyses of newspaper Web sites consistently show that newspapers are not using the capabilities unique to the Internet – immediacy, multi-media (e.g., graphics, pictures and video), interactivity, vast amounts of information and global representation.

After studying the online editions of three major newspapers, Xigen Li determined that newspaper Web sites were heavy on textual content and light on graphic information.[18] Mark Thalhimer concluded from his study of newspaper Web sites that newspapers were not producing original stories for their Web sites, but simply doing "shovelware" from their print to their electronic version.[19] Similarly, in her study of two newspapers with online counterparts, Shannon Martin observed that, other than refiguring headlines for space considerations, content changes were relatively minor and rare from print newspapers to online newspapers.[20] Brian Massey and Mark Levy noted from their research of English-language print newspapers in Asia and their Web sites that while the newspaper Web sites offered involved news content, they were lacking in four other areas—interactivity, responsiveness to the user, ease of adding information, facilitation of interpersonal communication and immediacy.[21]

Jane Singer looked at six newspapers in Colorado and their online counterparts. She found that the online newspapers in her study offered less than half of the information found in the print versions. And, that most of the content saved for online was local and most of the content that was cut was non-local. Similar to prior research, the newspaper Web sites in Singer's study had no original daily news stories, but were composed of mostly content reformatted to fit the online space requirements. She commented that the absence of substantive artwork among the newspapers Web sites she studied was remarkable—only 18 percent of the online stories had accompanying artwork. Furthermore, newspaper Web sites seemed to be giving up their traditional gatekeeping function by simply linking readers to wire service Web sites instead of having editors select and present those stories they think their audiences need or want.[22]

In an examination of the differences among 422 Web sites associated with local newspapers, television stations and radio stations, Carolyn Lin and Leo Jeffres determined that, similar to the other media, newspapers reflected their traditional strengths and features online. Newspapers provided community service, advertising and news to their readers. Only half of the Web sites they studied linked to other sites, and just 10 to 15 percent of the links were to other media sites. Newspapers Web sites, in particular, linked to other print media, thus emphasizing the reading agenda for their audiences.[23]

The tragic events unfolding on Sept. 11 presented an excellent and unique opportunity, although an unfortunate one, for local newspaper Web sites to provide their readers with much needed information. They had three major chances on this day to attract and maintain readers. First, people working in offices without access to radios and television sets turned to the Internet for breaking information.[24] Second, people couldn't connect to national news Web sites because the simultaneous online traffic was too great.[25] Third, television Web sites were frequently inaccessible because graphics-heavy pages took too long to load and lines were clogged.[26]

Capitalizing on the unique nature of the World Wide Web and an event of catastrophic proportions about which readers were frantic to learn more, local newspapers had the capability to offer readers breaking reports, up-dated bulletins, comprehensive follow-up news, visual material, links to Web sites with supplemental information and the chance to talk with others about what was happening in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania, or how the bombings affected their local areas. As Nick Wren, editor of CNN.com.Europe said, "What the web can do is shout about a story as soon as it happens, then offer a huge multi-media resource for people to explore."[27]

On Tuesday, Sept. 11, the number of people using the Internet was down slightly from a typical day. Whereas about 56.5 percent of people with access to the Internet usually log on during the day, about 51 percent connected Tuesday and Wednesday.[28] Most people watched the television set for breaking news (about 81 percent, according to a national survey[29] and 88 percent, according to a local survey[30]). This reaction fits Stempel and his colleagues' conclusions that most people use television for breaking news, but then information seekers are likely to read the newspaper, access the Internet or listen to the radio for more information. Many people multi-task by listening to the radio while online.[31]

Yet, on Sept. 11, tens of thousands of Web searchers[32]—almost half of the information seekers online—had trouble for several hours getting to their desired Web site. While most others looked for information on another Web site, only two out of 10 quit trying.[33] Local newspaper Web sites had the chance to hook those people seeking an alternative news Web site. And, indeed, many local Web sites were the beneficiaries of traffic that was refused by national sites. They reported huge traffic gains that lasted for days to come.[34] Furthermore, while information from television Web sites—laden with their trademark photos or video—were slow to load for impatient information seekers, newspaper Web sites could put up a page with their trademark—short, bullet-point graphs announcing the latest developments and links to more detailed text stories. Thus, this was an opportunity for newspaper Web sites to grab and keep regular television Web site users because a homepage with few or no graphics loads faster and easier.[35]

Since Sept. 11, reviews of print newspapers' front pages and coverage of events have been applauded. Special print editions have been highly praised.[36]

Rusty Coats, director of new media for MORI Research in Minneapolis, noted that the terrorist attacks brought about the best in online news sites. They were "immediate, interactive and wielding a mighty wallop of multimedia . . . "[37] By the afternoon, (online) local takes on the events were commonplace online, according to Rob Runett, manager of electronic media analysis of the Newspaper Association of America.[38]

Yet, in his examination of newspaper Web sites for Sept. 11, online news expert Steve Outing "struggled to find good examples."[39] As reflected in the content of many industry crisis management articles that have been published since Sept. 11, many newspaper Web sites were caught off-guard.[40] Online newspapers eventually caught up with the news, but many did not use the Internet's capabilities to present breaking news in a timely manner to their needy readers.

Thus, the objective of this study was to examine local newspaper Web sites and to find out what they provided in coverage of Tuesday's bombings. Did newspaper Web sites provide breaking news to readers? Did they use the advantages of the World Wide Web to engage their readers? In other words, were newspaper Web sites a viable place for readers to find information about this catastrophic event? The results will break ground on how newspaper Web sites cover a breaking event. The data will update the literature about newspapers' use of Web sites and if newspapers have progressed in their use of the technology to provide coverage to their readers. And, importantly, the results will illuminate areas in which newspapers can improve their coverage of crisis events and what journalism instructors of Web classes need to tell their students about covering breaking news.

Research Questions

In order to address the objectives of the study, the following research questions were asked:

> **RQ1: What percentage of daily newspaper Web sites had any coverage of the Sept. 11 attacks by late morning or late afternoon?**
>
> **RQ2: Did variables, such as circulation size, publication cycle (morning or evening) or geographic time zone, contribute to the likelihood of online newspaper coverage that day?**
>
> **RQ3: What textual coverage – such as full text stories, briefs or headlines — were used on the home pages and to what degree?**
>
> **RQ4: What type of photos of the day's events appeared on the front (home) page that day? And what were their sources?**
>
> **RQ5: What interactive or multi-media elements or teasers for these elements were present?**

Method

The research questions were answered through a content analysis of daily newspaper home pages captured in the late morning and late afternoon of Sept. 11. A third set was captured on Thursday, Sept. 13, to control for newspapers that did not publish news on their home pages, or had static, navigational home pages.

As the events unfolded on the morning of Sept. 11, the lead author sampled 11 percent from a listing of 1,235 regional daily newspaper Web sites maintained by the Newspaper Association of America.[41] This sampling frame list was used recently in a census study published in Newspaper Research Journal, and was shown to be valid.[42] Because the Web is an ever-changing medium, the home page captures needed to take place in a short period of time, and thus the N was based on the timeliness required and the available manpower to capture a reasonable sample.

A systematic random sample of 134 home pages was attempted (every nth resulting in nearly 11% of the population). At 11 a.m. (all reported times are EST) an undergraduate class of 10 students was trained to capture screen shots in a Macintosh lab (with 17" monitors); the morning capture took place between 11:15 a.m. and noon, about 2-1/2 hours after the first plane crashed into the World Trade Center.[43]

As reported in the press, Web site servers were down or busy and network speed was relatively slow. Due to network problems and coder capture error, the morning session yielded an N of 101. It was assumed that the error was random and not systematic. As the purpose of this study was to discover the content on Web sites, those Web sites not appearing online were discarded. However, the bottom line is that these Web sites were not available to anxious readers.

While the net N may seem a little low, it should be noted that this was an intense moment. Students were somewhat panicked with frayed emotions and a clouded feeling of our nation being "at war;" but, due to the live nature of the Web, there was no turning back, and no chance to do it again. No other entity is known to have captured so many pages at a specific instance in time. There are some archives that show major Web sites at their best that day, but no capture was systematic or at such specific times.[44]

In the afternoon, using a similar (but more organized) method, a class of 16 undergraduate students captured the same home pages from that morning and more from 3:30 to 4 p.m., about 7 hours after the initial WTC attack. This second capture took place more quickly because of the increased number of students used to capture the home pages, a more organized capture checklist and networks did not seem to be as busy in the afternoon as they were in the morning. The N for the afternoon capture was 118.

Then, another capture session took place on Sept. 13 so that a comparison with the Sept. 11 original captures could be made to eliminate from the analysis sites with static (non-news) home pages. These navigational home pages were removed. This left a final N of 89 for the morning group and 108 for the afternoon group.

Because these were screen captures, only information "above the fold" (or scroll) was visible. But researchers Fred Fico, Carrie Heeter, Stan Soffin and Cynthia Stanley pointed out, newspaper editors make judgments on the news value of items and place those items on pages to attract reader attention. "Top stories" are prominently displayed on front pages with additional visual cues, enabling readers to identify what editors consider important to readers.[45] Similarly, online editors with scrollable lead pages would place breaking news on the top half of their newspaper Web site to attract readers' attention.

Variables and Coding

It is difficult to apply systematic content analysis to a medium that is always changing, noted McMillan when she examined ways in which researchers had applied content analysis to the World Wide Web.[46] Thus, this study looked at general content, not detailed elements. The variables used in answering the research questions were defined as follows:

9/11 Coverage: This was defined as whether there was an alert of any type on the viewable home page to the bombing of the WTC or later attacks.

Textual elements: A *headline* was defined as one or more phrases used to describe a story or brief (with or without an embedded link). A *brief* was composed of a paragraph or sentence summarizing an event or issue. Or, it was the first paragraph of a longer story found elsewhere in the web site. A *full-text story* was defined as a report of several paragraphs that begins and ends on the home page screen capture. Or, it continues to the bottom of the screen capture.

Interactivity: This content was defined as a link composed of words or pictures clicked on to connect to another area in the same or another web site.

Multimedia: These are elements composed of an area or teaser for interactivity (e.g., for message boards or chat rooms), animation, video, movement or sound.

Local: This was defined as any part of the coverage (words, pictorial or sounds) that shows the local community dealing with or reacting to the events of 9/11. This included local stories and wire stories that were localized.

Circulation and other influential variables: These considerations were used as a proxy for the availability of newspapers' resources and were based on circulation numbers from Editor and Publisher.[47] Other variables also included publication cycle and geographic time zone.

To ensure that the definitions and coding instructions were reliable, 10 percent of the afternoon Web sites with coverage (N = 12) were selected at random and the two coders coded the same data. Using Perreault and Leigh's reliability measure for nominal data,[48] and Pearson's r for ratio data, 17 variables and categories were tested. Fourteen of the 17 variables scored from .83 to 1. These scores were judged to be high, thus reliable. Three variables scored below .60 and were removed from the analysis.

Results and Discussion

The mean circulation of papers in the total data set was 37,807 (SD = 59,447, median = 15,725). The distribution was positively skewed (3.3) due to several large circulation outliers. As shown below, these outliers were at times removed to make the distribution more normal for statistical testing. The sample was composed of 54 percent morning and 46 percent evening papers. The mean and the morning-evening ratio corresponds closely to a census of the NAA sampling frame (M = 35,452, 48 percent morning, 52 percent evening. Thus the sample was deemed representative of the population. The time zone distribution was 53 papers in the eastern time zone, 50 in central, 18 in mountain and 13 in pacific.

RQ1: What percentage of daily newspaper Web sites had any coverage of the Sept. 11 attacks by late morning or late afternoon?

As of almost noon, 65 percent (n = 58) of the sampled sites had no information about the WTC attacks on the front pages of their Web sites. By the afternoon sample, which was captured about seven hours after the first attack, 38 percent (n = 41) still had no indication of any of the WTC attacks. (See Chart 1.)

[INSERT CHART 1 HERE]

The second set of major events that morning was the United Airlines Flight 93 crashing in Pennsylvania and American Airlines Flight 77 slamming into the Pentagon. Both of these took place about 9:40 a.m. About two hours later, in the morning sample, 75 percent (n = 67) of the sites had no information about this second wave of attacks. In the afternoon capture, 51 percent (n = 55) still had no information. (See Chart 2.)

[INSERT CHART 2 HERE]

Such a high incidence of no coverage indicates that newspapers generally have not adapted very well to the immediacy offered by the Internet. The lag time demonstrated by the appearance of the Pentagon and Pennsylvania stories also supports this lack of ability to handle breaking news. Printed newspapers are often described as containing "yesterday's news," and their performance, in this case, certainly bolsters this perception among readers. Arguably, the biggest story in the last 50 years breaks, and the vast majority of newspaper Web sites were not prepared to inform, communicate or solicit interaction with their audience for two or more hours after the event. This result supports previous studies about content on newspaper Web sites.

Perhaps, as Rusty Coats of the American Press Institute explained, many newspaper Web sites had no information for several hours because the online staff had not yet come into the newsroom, and no one else knew how to post information.[49] One of the major attributes of the World Wide Web is that it is not expensive to post information. The posting of information can be automated internally with paid or even free syndicated services. Thus, results suggest many newspapers failed in their immediate coverage of Sept. 11 because of a lack of planning rather than budget.

RQ2: Did variables such as circulation size, publication cycle (morning or evening) or geographic time zone, contribute to the likelihood of online newspaper coverage that day?

Web sites with breaking WTC coverage during the morning capture had significantly higher circulation (M = 61,102, SD=67,781) than papers lacking coverage (M = 17,583, SD = 20,193) (See Chart 3). The large circulation papers had an impact on the mean differences (t = 4.51, p < .001). But the effect of circulation size is further revealed by the circulation means of the afternoon capture. The mean circulation of sites with coverage decreased (M = 58,213, SD = 73,787) as did the mean of those lacking coverage (M = 14,774 SD = 31,134, t = 3.53, p < .01). Both means decreasing indicates that those "catching up" between the two captures were smaller, rather than larger circulation papers.

[INSERT CHART 3 HERE]

The posting of information more quickly by larger newspapers—perhaps related to staff size and resource availability—suggests that newspapers in general, and the smaller ones in particular, had not thought about how to effectively use their Web sites during a time of national crisis. And it raises the questions of what role(s) local news organizations can and should play in a time of national crisis in reporting global information. Perhaps local news organizations need to think about ways to partner more effectively with national and international news organizations to provide links to or obtain streaming headlines from these larger organizations.

Newspapers' publication cycles may have had an impact on their Web site content. More morning papers and fewer evening papers were in the morning coverage group than expected ($X^2 = 6.18$, $p = .01$, DF = 1). Perhaps this is because morning papers on average have higher circulations than evening papers; thus, they were more likely to have more resources available, such as online staff.

The effect of circulation size on coverage was controlled for by only examining papers of a similar size. Papers with a circulation size that fell more than one standard deviation above or below the mean were removed from the analysis, and the chi square test was run again. Thus, with the effect of circulation size removed, there was no significant difference between the morning and evening papers in terms of initial coverage ($X^2 = 3.51$, $p = .06$).

The effect of time zone was not significant for the morning capture either ($p = .14$). Therefore, papers on the West coast were no more or less likely to have immediate coverage than those on the East coast.

RQ3: What textual coverage such as full text stories, briefs or headlines were used on the home pages and to what degree?

Of the 31 sites in the morning group with coverage, the most popular form of presentation (77 percent) was multiple headlines without briefs (which apparently linked to full stories) (See Chart 4). About half of the sites had just one or two headlines, but eight sites had five or more (the mode was 1 headline). Forty-eight percent of the sites used briefs (the mode still being 1). Three percent (one site) featured a full text story on its home page. (The total percentages are greater than 100 percent because some sites used a variety of text devices.) In sum, the average number of textual units (headline, brief or full story) appearing on each Web site with coverage in the morning group was 3.45.

In the afternoon group, sites with coverage now preferred briefs (64 percent) slightly more than headlines (57 percent). But again, the mode for each of these was one. Two sites (3 percent) featured a full text story. The total number of editorial units in the afternoon group sites with coverage was 4.25, indicating increasing coverage.

[INSERT CHART 4 HERE]

In the morning group, eight of the 31 sites (26 percent) with textual coverage had already localized their textual coverage in some way. For example, one site featured a story about the local airport being shut down. The percentage of sites that had localized a textual element had increased substantially by the afternoon capture to 67 percent. Stepping back, however, only 26 percent the afternoon group's total N of 108 had any localized coverage on their home pages.

Another interesting way to view the issue of presentation is to examine format and space utilization. Fifty-nine percent of the Web sites in the morning capture and 49 percent of the Web sites in the afternoon capture were utilizing 50 percent or less of their "above the fold" editorial space for 9/11 coverage. Although the percentage of editorial space increased a bit by the afternoon capture, it is interesting to juxtapose this use of Web space with the use of front page space the following day in the printed newspapers.

In addition to immediacy, the Web offers newspapers increased space and interactivity. That the number and type of information units were relatively low and did not change much over the course of the day suggests that most papers updated their coverage in a traditional newspaper fashion, and did not use the opportunity to make that coverage deeper by adding more stories without deleting earlier coverage. Apparently, most papers did not take the opportunity to begin to build a story archive for which the Web is so well suited. This, too, could be explained by a lack of adequate planning regarding crisis coverage and the utilization of the Web.

Additionally, many of the news organizations that utilized the Web earlier in the day to provide initial coverage, realized that to meet their news obligation to their readers they had to report on aspects of the story that were local. Thus the percentage of local coverage increased during the day, as newspapers had time to seek out and report on how the national catastrophe was impacting their communities. This is the traditional role of a local newspaper.

RQ4: What type of photos of the day's events appeared on the front (home) page that day? And what were their sources?

Fifty-two percent of the 31 morning group sites with coverage featured some type of a still image. Nearly all of these sites (13) featured just one photo, while one site featured two and another site featured three photos. Three sites identified the photos as still images; six sites identified their photos as captured images from a video source (cable or network news) and the remainder (6) did not include identifying information. The coders did not feel comfortable judging an image's source, strictly on the quality of the image.

In the afternoon group, 69 percent of the sites with coverage had some type of a photo reflecting the day's events. The vast majority had one photo (38) and the remaining (8) had two or three photos. Fifteen sites had photos specifically identified as still photographs, 15 as captured images from a video source and 19 sites included at least one still image with no ID. But again, as far as the total N of 108, only 43 percent of all of the afternoon group sites had any visual coverage. (See Chart 5.)

[INSERT CHART 5 HERE]

Three aspects of the findings here are worthy of comment. First, given the technical ease of getting access to wire photos and broadcast material, it seems somewhat surprising that even seven or more hours after the terrorist attacks only 43 percent of the sites had any images. Second, it is also a bit surprising to find that nearly half the images posted were not from traditional still picture sources, but were video captures. Most likely, this was because all the networks went live and provided a steady stream of images throughout the day. Some site managers were confident with both the technical and legal issues involved in capturing material from a broadcast source. (These broadcast sources were either directly credited or implicated credit via the station logo appearing on the screen.) But what does the appearance of a network logo say about a newspaper's ability to gather and disseminate breaking news?

And third, although providing video is just as easy as still images on a newspaper Web site, newspapers chose to provide very little moving and interactive visual information. This may suggest that newspapers do not think about the value of providing information in a format more traditionally associated with broadcast news, but easy to incorporate into a Web site. It also may mean that they had not thought about the value of developing working relationships for information sharing with other types of media, at least during a crisis. As bandwidth increases and consumers become more accustomed to watching video on the Web, these types of partnerships will become increasingly important.

RQ5: What interactive and multimedia elements or teasers for these elements were present?

Just three of the 31 morning capture sites featured video or specific links to video files to view. Four sites featured interactive content or links or teasers to interactive content such as polls or message boards. Three sites at this earlier capture included some type of a teaser about a special print edition that would be available later that afternoon. And on a production note, two of the 31 sites were illegible in terms of their graphical or design presentation, denoting some type of perhaps rushed programming problem.

By the afternoon capture, just eight of the 67 sites (with coverage) featured video or specific links to video files to view. The number of sites with specific interactive content had gone down to just one; meanwhile, 17 sites now featured a teaser to a special afternoon edition of the paper. Five of the 67 sites were illegible in terms of their graphical or design presentation.

The use of teasers by only 17 of the papers to alert users to a special edition demonstrates that a relatively small number of newspapers thought to use their Web site as a marketing tool to sell their printed product. This finding supports Lin and Jeffres' conclusion that newspaper Web sites (compared to radio and television Web sites) lacked self promotion to the newspaper and to the newspaper Web site.[50]

The absence of multimedia or specific interactive elements, again suggests that these news organizations were not thinking about how to use the Web as a medium to provide their users with a type of information not available in print. This may explain the incredibly heavy flow of information during the day combined by a lack of adequate resources, or it also may be explained by a lack of conceptual understanding of the possibilities the Web offers for new ways of packaging information.

Two of the sites had problems with graphical and/or design presentations in the morning and the number increased to five in the afternoon, suggesting the speed of the events of the day may have outpaced the technical ability of these news organizations to deal with the technology of web-based information dissemination in a timely manner.

Summary and Conclusions

Sept. 11 may be seen as the day the World Wide Web was tested for the first time as an information provider during a crisis of truly epic proportions. While one of the advantages of disseminating information via the Web is speed, making textual communication more immediate than print, it is clear from this study that many newspapers did not use their Web sites to provide a continuous nor in-depth stream of information.

Sixty-five percent of the Web sites in the late morning and 38 percent in the late afternoon said nothing about the WTC bombings. Furthermore, 75 percent in the late morning and 51 percent still by late afternoon were silent about the events in Pennsylvania and the Pentagon. These findings support prior studies that newspapers are not using the World Wide Web to its full potential. They missed an opportunity to reassert their role as primary sources of unfolding information. Furthermore, by having little or nothing online, newspaper Web sites may have pushed information seekers to television and other media outlets.

Perhaps these newspapers view their Web sites as secondary news vehicles. It is a possibility that they simply do not see the relevance of providing national and international news on a local site. Or, maybe a traditional print media mentality about competition prevailed. Most towns have one daily newspaper. However, newspapers have to learn to compete on the World Wide Web where many different media rival each other.

These findings reflect that local newspaper Web sites should develop crisis guidelines. Considerations within these guidelines should include the following: 1) training an emergency online staff, 2) making arrangements to use or link to major news organizations' text or video clips, 3) figuring how to get local news faster, 4) re-assessing bandwidth needs, 5) reverting to low-end graphics, 6) examining the interactive software and use of it, 7) analyzing what readers wanted during this time and provide it next time.[51]

Regardless of time zone differences and circulation size, a significant percentage of newspapers did not devote resources to providing news of these cataclysmic events on their Web sites. The reasons why, such as inadequate staff or other factors, is the focus of another study. Future studies also should examine what local newspapers perceive the role of their Web sites to be in a global environment and during crisis situations. And, it would be interesting to find out what newspaper Web sites learned from their coverage, or lack of coverage, and if they have put in place some sort of crisis event planning for the future.

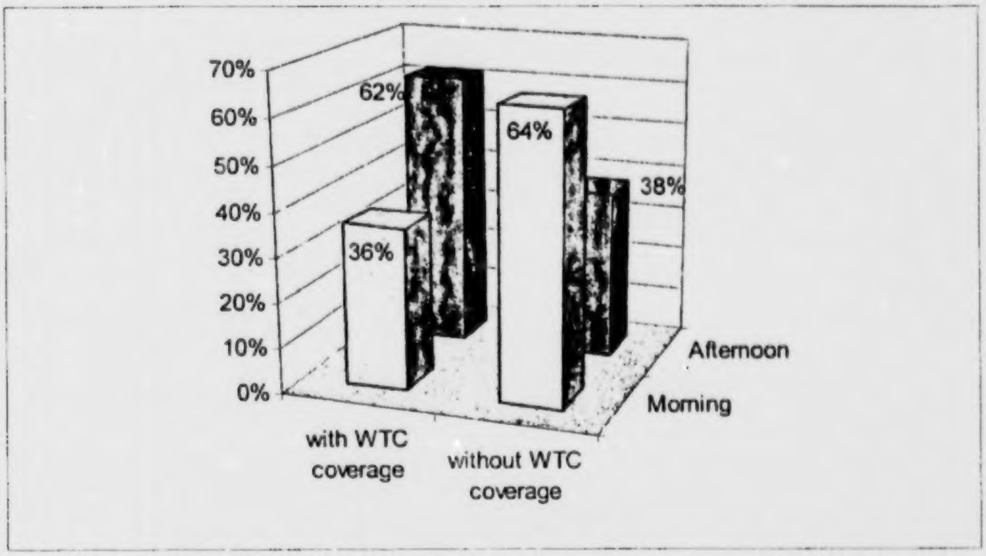

Chart 1: Percentage of newspaper home pages with and without initial 9/11 coverage, by morning and afternoon capture group.

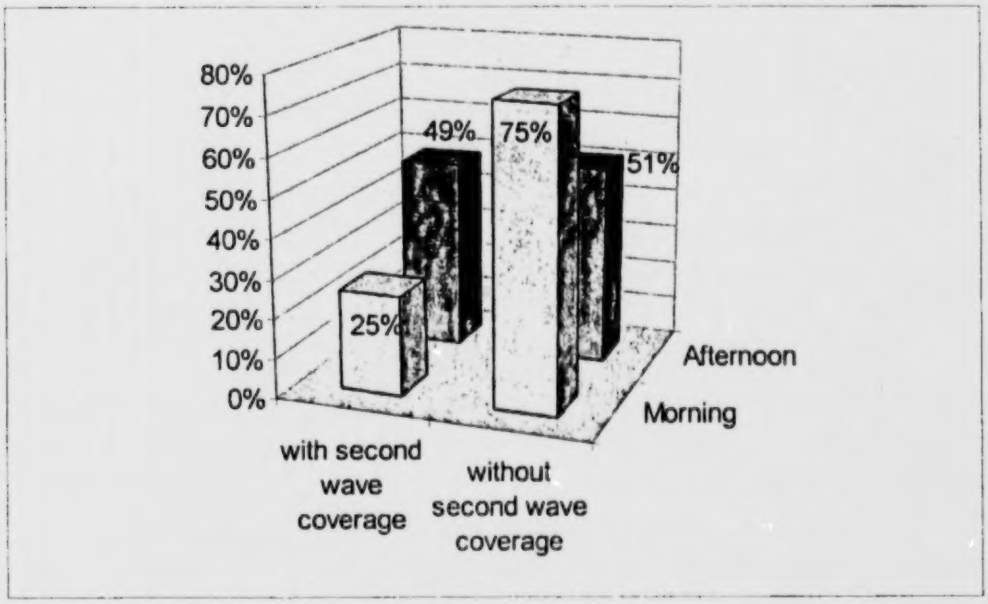

Chart 2: Percentage of newspaper home pages with and without second wave coverage, by morning and afternoon capture group.

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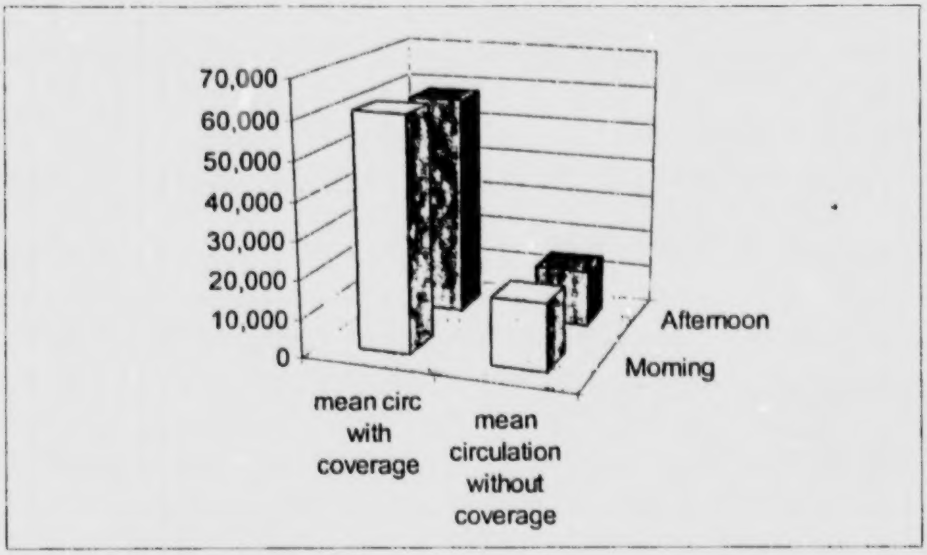

Chart 3: Mean circulations of newspaper Web sites with and without coverage, by morning and afternoon capture group.

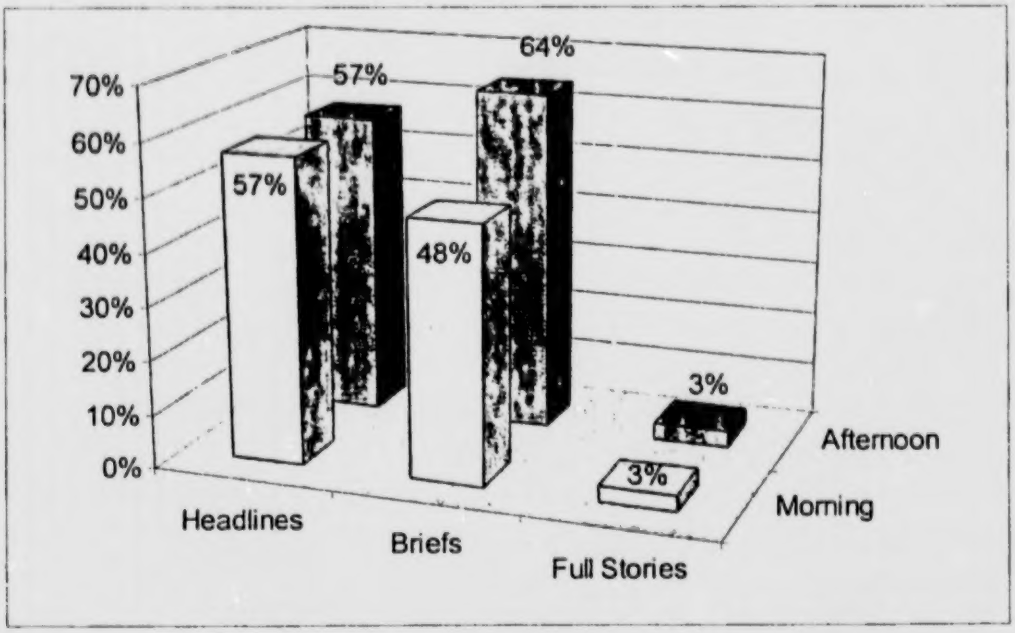

Chart 4: Categories of textual presentation strategies for sites with coverage, by morning and afternoon capture groups.

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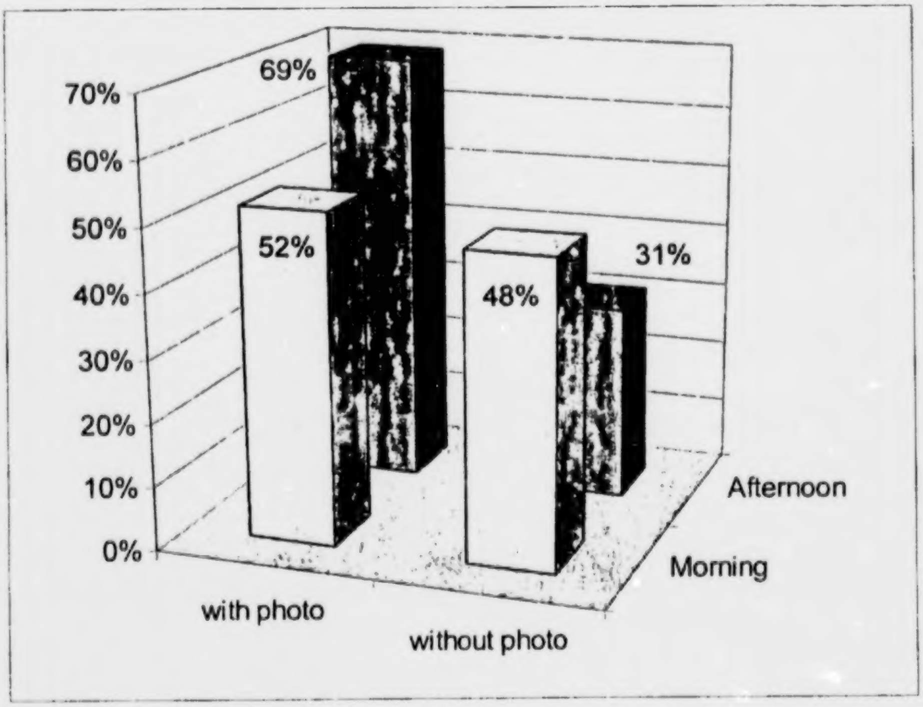

Chart 5: Percentage of sites with coverage that included visual coverage as well, by morning and afternoon capture groups.

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[1] For more information about the assassination of President Kennedy and media's reaction, see Michael Emery, Edwin Emery and Nancy L. Roberts, The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media. Ninth Edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2000, pp.396-401.

[2] Edwin Newman. Contemporary Theatre, Film and Television Biographies. Gale Group, Vol. 5, 1988.

[3] JFK Assassination: As It Happened. NBC television. November 22, 1988.

[4] This is based on an analysis of the timeline of the events of March 30, 1981, and an examination of the videotape recordings of ABC, CBS and NBC news in the Vanderbilt University Television News Archive.

[5] For more information about Edward R. Murrow and his radio reports, see, for example, Emory, Emory and Roberts. The Press and America, pp.324-326.

[6] CNN sent a production team into the Iraqi capital when the crisis began in August and was given permission by authorities to use a special "4-wire" phone link directly to company headquarters in Atlanta. See name of Web site and date accessed http://www.peterarnett.com/html/gulf-bio.html.

[7] The availability of the Starr Report online to the public demonstrates the power, reach and depth of the Internet as a dissemination system. The Starr Report in 1998 discussed the indiscretions of President Clinton. As soon as the report was released to the public, it was available in its entirety to a worldwide audience. Referral to the United States House of Representatives pursuant to Title 28, United States Code § 595(c) submitted by The Office of The Independent Counsel Sept. 28, 1998. See http://thomas.loc.gov/icreport.

[8] Actual numbers for January 2002 were 454,988,344 for the current Internet user universe estimate and 260,112,760 for the active Internet universe. Nielsen Ratings for Internet Use, http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/hot_off_the_net.jsp.

[9] Guido H. Stempel III, Thomas Hargrove and Joseph P. Bernt, Relation of Growth of use of the Internet to Changes in Media Use from 1995 to 1999. Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, Vol.77, No.1 (Spring 2000), pp. 71-79.

[10] Actual numbers ending March 10, 2002. are 166,186,633 for the current Internet user universe in the United States and 79,974,542 are active users. Nielsen Ratings for Internet Use, http://pm.netratings.com/nnpm/owa/NRpublicreports.usageweekly

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[11] And more specifically, the networks newscasts drew a nightly average of 23 million viewers during the week of March 4. Howard Kurtz, Troubled Times for Network Evening News. The Washington Post, March 10, 2002, p. A01.

[12] Stempel et al., Relation of Growth of use of the Internet.

[13] "Regularly" was defined as four or more times a week. Stempel et al., Relation of Growth of use of the Internet.

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[15] Christopher Callahan. A Journalist's Guide to the Internet: the Net as a Reporting Tool. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1999, p.52.

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[17] McMillan examined published and unpublished research in sociology and mass communication fields when illustrating the challenges associated with applying content analysis to the Web. She identified about four studies dealing specifically with newspaper Web sites, 15 dealing with Web sites generally and 11 focusing on computer-mediated communication. Sally McMillan, The Microscope and the Moving Target: The Challenge of Applying Content Analysis to the World Wide Web. Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, Vol.77, No.1 (Spring 2000), pp.80-98. The present study includes more recent research.

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[19] Mark Thalhimer, High-Tech News or Just "Shovelware"? Media Studies Journal, Vol. 8 (Winter 1994), pp.41-51.

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[26] Mike Wendland, Overloaded Internet Fails.

[27] Owen Gibson, When the Web Came of Age. Media Guardian.com. Monday, Sept. 17, 2001. http://media.guardian.co.uk/mediaguardian/story/0,7558,552692,00.html.

[28] Actual numbers are 55 to 58 percent. Al Tompkins, Where We Get Our News.

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Practicing diversity: An exploratory study of implementing diversity in the newsroom

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Practicing diversity: An exploratory study of implementing diversity in the newsroom

Abstract

In interviews at four newspapers, the authors found that the critical issues facing the journalists at these newspapers included overcoming the negative images of the newspapers in the community, reconnecting with ignored communities, and using minority gatekeepers to provide an additional perspective on stories. It was found that the newspapers were generally still operating under diversity paradigms that measured success in diversity in terms of numbers and targeting to minority communities.

Practicing diversity: An exploratory study of implementing diversity in the newsroom

"As journalists, many of us, black and white, bring preconceived notions to stories. The myth of objectivity is just that - a myth."
(Sloan, 1996, p. 28)

Journalists do bring preconceived notions to the stories they cover, write and edit. And in much of our media those preconceived notions come from white, middle class, male writers and editors. The push to diversify media has been in some ways an attempt to challenge some of those preconceived notions. For years, professional journalism organizations and scholars have studied diversity in the newsroom and tried, at least numerically, to understand whether minorities and women were being included in the news and in the newsroom. Although statistics showed that progress and change had occurred, individual stories about diversity and the difficulty of incorporating it into daily news practices revealed a less than smooth road to achieving diversity.

While most news organizations will readily agree that diversity in newsrooms is an important goal, there is not agreement on how best to achieve diversity, why it's an important goal or even how to define it. To some organizations, it makes good sense to reach all audiences and communities by including different voices and perspectives. Some of the recent 'urgency' to diversify has resulted from formal corporate policy designed to implement diversity in newsrooms and in newspapers because it was seen not only as the right thing to do but the right economic thing to do.

But what is diversity, and what does it mean to practice diversity in the newsroom? In this study, we interviewed editors and reporters at four newspapers to explore what, to them, were the critical issues in 'practicing diversity'.

Background Literature

One concern that drives some of the diversity debate is the notion of how media have traditionally covered women and minorities. The 1968 Kerner Commission Report cited the media's contribution to the volatile and violent race relations of that period, saying that the media had failed to inform the public about racial issues and routinely depicted African-Americans inadequately and inaccurately (Irby, 1994). Studies have shown that some newspapers have been guilty of ignoring, making light of, or denigrating minority communities and minority and women's issues (Bridge, 1994). In some cases, minority groups have argued that they have been covered in spot news featuring crime or upheaval, but not as holistically as white communities. As Gandy argued (1997), the media's tendency to depict African Americans and Hispanics as violent criminals is cause for concern because of the media's role in the cultivation of social perception. According to the cultivation model, media images provide the raw material from which audience members construct their own pictures of the world (Gandy, 1997).

All news media have struggled with the issue of diversity and how to incorporate it into their practices. Newspapers have felt this push perhaps more intensely because of declining readership and the need to stay competitive in media-saturated markets. One of the problems with newspapers is that they have sometimes only served those who already read the newspaper (Pease, 1990). According to Pease, diversity is not just about numbers and hiring practices, it is also about how newspapers should view their role for all of society: watchdog, mirror, commentator, conscience of society. Some critics have suggested that the press cover "a much broader range of white life than of minority life" (Shaw, 1991, p. 14).

In the early 1990's studies showed that minority readers were simply not finding references to their life and community in many newspapers. Because minorities were underrepresented, news organizations suggested that newspapers do more to show minorities as a part of daily life, to integrate minorities into all of the pages of the opinion pages and to cover minority cultures, communities and places of origins (Garneau, 1992). Studies during this time also revealed that minority readers wanted newspapers to offer useful information about their community and they wanted "to see their friends and neighbors in the pages, and to find their values and culture reflected and confirmed" several years, professional news organizations such as the American Society of Newspaper Editors have advocated specific goals in minority recruitment (Ghiglione, 1998), while others have decried the practice of putting so much emphasis on pure numbers as a measure of diversity. The most recent numbers from studies funded by the Association of Newspaper Editors and The Freedom Forum, show that minority representation at newspapers has actually decreased (the first decline in over 2 decades) and that the number of newspapers with no minorities on staff actually increased for the first time in many years. ("2001 ASNE Census Finds Newsrooms Less Diverse"; McGill, 1999).

In addition to the numerical disparity, minority and non-minority journalists do not share perceptions of what's going on in newspapers. Studies have shown that non minority and minority journalists feel very differently on issues ranging from hiring and promotion, career success, equal treatment, hiring criteria, racism, diversity commitment, and plans to remain or move on. In particular, minority reporters felt that their daily performance was judged more harshly, that the bar was raised for minority reporters and that they had to be better than the best reporter was in order to be evaluated equally with non-minority reporters (Cohen, 1996; Roefs, 1993). Finally, minority reporters have expressed frustration with being hired because they are minorities but then having their minority perspective edited out of stories or being hired and then pigeonholed into covering only minority issues (Shipler, 1998).

Some critics have suggested that appealing to minorities through minority quota hiring and 'forced' inclusion of diversity will not work. Several researchers have suggested that there is no real minority readership gap and that newspaper readership is a function of education and income, not race (Cranberg & Rodriguez, 1994; Stone, 1994). Although arguing that minority-oriented content in news is condescending and perpetuates myth, Cranberg and Rodriquez do think that diverse newsrooms and improved coverage of minority communities is overdue. William McGowan (2001), in his recent book, Coloring the News, uses anecdotal evidence to argue that reporters and

(Stein, 1991, p. 22).

The perspective, not just the numbers in the newsrooms, needs to change according to Charlie Ericksen, publisher of Hispanic Link. "I'd like to see the U.S. media redefine its antiquated version of what is news. News is not just something that belongs to white folks in the suburbs" (as quoted in Nuiry, 1997, p. 38). In several studies focusing on television news coverage of African Americans, Entman and others have found that depictions of Blacks have been unfavorable in comparison with whites on several dimensions, including crime coverage, coverage of political leaders and coverage of affirmative action (Entman, 1990; 1992; 1994; Entman & Rojecki, 2000). According to this research, the lack of context in covering Blacks contributed to whites' racialized fears of crime and whites' negative views of policies, programs and leaders that have helped blacks.

Women, too, have sometimes felt marginalized by newspapers. In the early 90's, McGrath (1993) reported a declining readership among women. McGrath and others argued that women saw the newspapers as having a male voice and male personality. (Astor, 1993; McGrath, 1993). Women were not appearing in newspapers and in newscasts in the same numbers as men (Woodhull, 1992). (For an overview of some of the issues of women in news, see also, Bridge, 1995; Lafky, 1993; Lont, 1995).

There is some evidence that lack of diversity in newsrooms can and does affect how minorities and women are portrayed. When women and minorities are missing from newsrooms, then they are underrepresented as sources (Gist, 1993). In addition, a lack of minorities in newsrooms can result in minorities making the news in either negative or very purposely positive stories, but not in mainstream news coverage of neutral stories. It can also lead to minimal coverage of issues considered important to minority communities (Gist, 1993).

For some, the solution to newspaper content that ignores, trivializes or sometimes even denigrates minorities and women is to diversity the staff. Many news organizations have seen diverse staffs as the end-all to the lack of diversity in content. In the past newspapers have not aggressively covered race and gender issues for fear of offending minority communities and minority staff members. He criticizes mainstreaming and other diversity programs that he says have hurt the ability of newspapers to objectively report on critical issues.

But including women and minorities in newsrooms and in top management positions does not insure diversity in newspaper content. Studies suggest that there may be pressure on women and minorities to 'think' like everyone else once they've achieved positions of power (Saltzman, 1994; Sanders, 1993). For many scholars, the reasons for having diversity in the media go beyond the 'good business' imperative. Many scholars advocate pluralism because allowing for diverse voices in the content of media is crucial and central to serving the broader principle of the robust marketplace of ideas, to hearing the voices of women and minorities perspectives on a variety of issues and to fostering an appreciation for differences in experience and knowledge (Allen, 1990; Glasser, 1992; Lawrence, 1990; Napoli, 2001). In some cases, researchers have found that good journalism and good business practices are not mutually exclusive and found that reporters felt that the publisher's diversity goals helped the newspaper reporting and coverage of the community (Gross, Curtin, & Cameron, 2001).

Paradigms of Diversity

There are so many variables in trying to understand diversity and how to diversify staff and content, that sometimes a holistic picture of how diversity can be incorporated into any company is lost. In struggling to understand the best ways to 'manage diversity', Thomas and Ely (1996) suggest that three different models of diversity help to explain how an organization sees diversity and how it then implements and finally measures diversity. In the "discrimination and fairness" model, the company is focused on 'compliance' with EEOC policies and with broad notions of equal opportunity and fair treatment. According to Thomas and Ely, "the staff gets diversified but the work does not" (p. 81) because this model does not allow the new perspectives provided by the diverse force to affect the company.

In Thomas' and Ely's second model, the access and legitimacy model, a company accepts differences and uses those differences to serve different markets, segmented by gender or race. In the final model of diversity offered by Thomas and Ely, the company attempts to connect diversity to work perspectives. In this 'emerging paradigm of diversity,' the strength of a diverse work force is seen as something that benefits the company in providing and incorporating diverse perspectives in the company's product. The company recognizes that cultural backgrounds will impact decisions and choices made by employees and the incorporation of employees' perspectives becomes part of the routine of the company. In fact, this incorporation may lead to a restatement and reconsideration of the company's mission. In this model, the emphasis is on integration, not assimilation or differentiation, like the other two models.

Procedures

The problem of diversity, then, is not an easy one to define or to solve. In this study we were interested in exploring some of the critical issues in incorporating diversity practices in newsrooms. Using the qualitative method of the long interview, we sought to explore how working journalists evaluated diversity issues at their newspapers. We hoped to be able to go beyond the "numbers" of diversity and the arguments about it being good or bad for business or journalism. By using interviews, we hoped to "situate these numbers in their fuller social and cultural context." (McCracken, 1988). In analyzing the information from the material, we allowed categories to emerge from what the journalists told us about their experiences with their newspapers. In our conclusion, we revisit the Thomas and Ely paradigms for managing diversity in light of our interview findings.

The Interviews

After contacting approximately eight newspapers suggested to us as having recently implemented diversity programs, four newspapers agreed to allow us to visit and interview reporters and editors. We asked to schedule interviews with a variety of people involved with covering minority issues or who have had to deal with diversity issues. In addition, once we arrived at the newspapers, we usually ended up doing extra interviews with journalists who found out what we were doing and asked to meet with us and talk with us about issues of diversity.

At each newspaper, we typically spoke with the editor, managing editors, editors of special sections (sports, business, lifestyle, entertainment), heads of diversity committees, readership committees and community relations committees, reporters assigned to particular beats or areas (minority affairs reporters, diversity issue reporters), and columnists who tended to cover and address issues of minority communities. At all of the newspapers, we attended news meetings and were given access to anyone in the newsroom who wanted to talk with us and with whom we wanted to talk.

For each interview, we used open-ended questions as a guide to the interview because of their connection with past research and theory as well as past 'diversity' issues discussed in professional publications. In every case, we found that certain questions were more appropriate for different staff members, but we did use the questionnaire outline (see Appendix 1) as a guide. Everyone we interviewed was asked about the following areas:

1. Questions about diversity training, diversity committees, hiring and training practices.

2. Questions on issues covered in the community, readership surveys, impact on their news content, use of minority affairs reporters and minority source lists.

The interviews at the four newspapers took place between October 1996 and March 1998. We interviewed 37 journalists at the four newspapers. The interviews were not tape-recorded; however, in all but 8 interviews, both authors were present. Many of the scheduled and unscheduled interviewees did not want to be taped so we felt it best to not tape any of the interviews. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and took place in the journalist's office, a conference room or at a local restaurant. In some cases, we scheduled follow-up interviews with reporters or editors because of information we later heard in other interviews. In addition, many of the journalists we interviewed provided us with names of other reporters or editors (not on our list) who they thought we should talk with.

As McCracken notes, it is important for the researchers in doing long interviews to talk about the climate and the culture of the interviews and to acknowledge the interaction of the researcher in the process. Both authors are female; one is white and one is of Filipino descent (one parent is Filipino). We have both worked as reporters at newspapers, and we knew friends or acquaintances of several of the journalists we interviewed. After each interview, we shared impressions and notes of the interview with each other. One issue that we were constantly assessing was how forthcoming we felt the reporters or editors had been during the interview. We felt overall that the journalists had been open and honest with us about their feelings. In several cases, reporters and editors prefaced their statements with general comments about how they wanted to be candid and felt that certain things needed to be said. We always tried to reassure the journalists that we were not interested in identifying names or newspapers in our reporting of the findings and that our main purpose was to explore diversity practices and to allow journalists to talk about how those practices were carried out at newspapers.

Findings

Although the interviews at the newspapers were not meant to suggest overall trends about the status of minorities and women at newspapers, some overview of our own sample is warranted to provide a context for the interviews and comments. The newspapers in our sample were owned by Hearst, Gannett, Knight Ridder and the Tribune Company. The 37 news people we interviewed included people who had been at the newspaper for over 20 years to those that had been there less than 5. Of the 37 interviews, our sample was made up of 16 men (10 white and 6 minority, including both African American and Hispanic/Latino) and 21 women (9 white and 12 minority, including, African-American, Hispanic/Latina and Filipina). We found that top management at the four newspapers was white and mainly men. Women did well in the lower ranks of supervisory positions; we did find minority men and women as editors of sections or assistant editors of special sections. (Please see Appendix 2 for the breakdown of the reporters or editors interviewed. Pseudonyms are provided for the journalists whom we quote in the findings.)

According to the journalists, there were several critical factors that influenced the practice of diversity at their newspapers. The factors that emerged from the interviews included overcoming the negative images of the newspapers in the community, reconnecting with minority communities, training in diversity, hiring and promoting a diverse staff, and having someone in a position of power who could provide a minority perspective.

Image Rebuilding and Connecting with the Communities

One of the most critical factors affecting the practice of diversity at the newspapers was the relationship (past and present) that journalists felt they had with their communities. In several cases, reporters and editors described an ongoing struggle to change their newspapers' reputations as racist and sensationalist in covering minority communities.

Viewing the newspaper as part of the problem was something the newspapers had explicitly tried to change in incorporating practices in reporting. In the city served by the Hearst paper the Hispanic community was in the majority. According to the Assistant Managing Editor (a Hispanic man), *Charles,* the newspaper in the past had stereotyped the Hispanic community in its coverage resulting in residual feelings of resentment. Although the goal for this paper as well as others was 'image-rebuilding' it was a difficult process and sometimes difficult to do because, as *Charles* said, "negative stories take people back to a negative impression of the newspaper."

Similarly, employees at the Tribune paper cited the paper's history as a major obstacle to its diversity efforts. According to several reporters, the paper had to overcome the old racist policies of the newspaper. In the eyes of minority communities, even formal policies and efforts to diversify were not trusted, particularly when language, stereotypes, negative images had all too frequently made it into the newspaper in the past. The editor (a white man) of The Tribune paper, *Darryl* expressed this sense of frustration in dealing with the community in terms of their old ideas about the newspaper. *Darryl* acknowledged and admitted that the paper (before The Tribune Company owned it) had been racist in its policies toward, particularly, the African American community, but he felt they were not now. However, *Darryl* sometimes felt the community still believed that the newspaper wanted to discriminate against them and any negative story about the community was seen as a direct 'offense' against the community.

Because of the problems with past coverage of communities by the newspapers, establishing new relationships with community sources and leaders became critical to the reporters and editors. Management at the newspapers expressed that one of the most important areas of diversity was educating staff about the importance of understanding the community. Diversity was important because, "if you don't serve all who are in your community, then you give up being a mass medium," according to *Diane*, the managing editor at the Tribune Company paper. "Diversity is about connecting with readers. . . you can get good ideas about coverage by having women and minorities on staff. If you only have white male perspectives, then your perception of things will get skewed." Editors and reporters expressed a variety of reasons why connecting with diverse readers was important. Several of them were happy to take on the "market-driven" label or the good business imperative vision of diversity. Others were less comfortable with that being the sole reason for connecting with communities, preferring to see diversity as the right thing to do.

All reporters and editors at the newspapers supported diversity, in the very broadest sense. But many of the newspapers had encountered resistance to more specifically defined diversity issues. For example, *Walter* (head of personnel at the Tribune paper) had sensed a resistance among some white reporters in having to be 'sensitive' to other viewpoints. " (I) don't know why reporters resist being sensitive to other's viewpoint. After all they are adept at not offending their sources in the police department or in government, why is it less important to be sensitive to others' viewpoints and other communities? You have to be sensitive to sources, so why not be sensitized to voices of other communities… of the Black community …of the Hispanic community."

In addition to trying to change informal attitudes about the importance of diversity, the newspapers also implemented diversity in news coverage through a variety of strategies aimed at improving everyday reporting practices. All of the reporters believed that the newspapers had tried to do better in connecting with and covering communities but that there was much room for improvement. The newspapers used a variety of programs and plans to try to 'reconnect' with their communities and to insure that they were covering issues that would be of importance in the community. They pursued avenues that allowed them to target communities for coverage but also to place minority communities into their every day coverage of news. Three strategies used were mainstreaming, zoning and team reporting.

Nancy, an African American entertainment editor at the Gannett paper, believed that mainstreaming helped reporters think about ways to include all sorts of people in their everyday coverage. Mainstreaming, to her, asked the newspaper to reflect the diversity in the community and that this helped educate reporters about the need to include people in daily coverage. To her, one goal of mainstreaming was to make a reporter think beyond his or her own experience and to get beyond their own comfort levels and go into situations where they might not be comfortable. During some brown bag lunches with reporters, white reporters had told her that they were sometimes not comfortable going into places with all Blacks. Her response was that "they need to go into (these) communities and get comfortable."

A second goal of mainstreaming from *Nancy's* perspective was for readers to see themselves in the newspapers. *Nancy* spoke of a Mother's Day article on cooking that had appeared in her newspaper. The article featured Black women in the pictures and in the interviews for the story. To *Nancy*, this meant "you've now brought Black women (readers) into the story. Minorities believe there are barriers to getting into the newspaper. By showing regular folk in the paper that look like them, these barriers might be broken down." Some reporters at the Gannett paper were not happy with mainstreaming and felt it did not improve the depth of news or the attention paid to a minority community. In addition, mainstreaming sometimes meant that certain minority groups might not be covered in the way that others were. *Julie* (a Black reporter) at the Gannett newspaper believed that the newspaper was not covering communities, such as the Hispanic community, because mainstreaming focused on the African American community.

At the Hearst newspaper, one way that they tried to reach all communities was through zoning, where they would have community news featured in special zone editions. In this way, the newspaper was able to put news of relevance to a particular community or zone into a special edition for that zone. And, according to the managing editor, zoning had been very successful in serving specific communities. But minority reporters often saw problems with zoning. *Charles* sometimes had to argue that a story earmarked for a zone to a minority community needed to be run in the overall edition, not just in editions targeted to the Hispanic population. In one case, a story about the opening of the film, "Selena," was run in all sections because *Charles* felt it would be a huge story. Many of the white reporters did not want to do it. To *Charles,* "this was not racial, they (the white reporters) were just journalists out of touch with the community."

Other reporters and editors expressed concerns with the notion of zoning the news to particular communities. One Latina editor, *Doris*, *said* she found zoning news content disturbing, especially when issues that were seen as Hispanic issues were downplayed in position and prominence in the newspaper. In one case, the death of a prominent member of the Hispanic community was only featured in editions where Hispanics lived not in editions that went to high growth, white areas. To her, this was in some ways offensive that this news was not seen as an important issue for everyone in the city. *Charles* agreed saying, "there is a danger that if you only have stories about that one community in that zone's papers than it is just a mirror (of their community); they're (the communities) not learning anything about other communities." To *Charles*, featuring the Selena story on the front page may have helped transform the way reporters and the communities saw what was news.

A final formal way that one of the newspapers used to connect with communities was through team reporting. Team reporting occurs when groups of reporters from different areas work on a particular story, such as an education story or crime story. Team reporting tries to group together reporters, editors, photographers and graphic artists into the story.

A 'story of the moment' (or a breaking story) team leader at the Knight-Ridder newspaper, *Margaret* believed that team reporting did refocus the beats and that "the refocusing had broadened their definitions but not necessarily their horizons. The framework is there to be able to cover more issues, but that may not be what's happening in practice." According to *Margaret*, some groups were still being missed in the newspaper's coverage of communities (an example for her were newly arrived immigrant groups.) And team reporting did help the newspaper begin to tap into the minority institutions in the community but not necessarily into the Black community or into the issues of the community. In her mind, team reporting had not changed the business or features sections very much.

In addition to these formal policies and programs, the newspapers had used a variety of tools to 'reconnect' with communities and to try to cover their communities more fairly and in more depth. Readership surveys, appointing of a minority affairs reporter, community outreach/educational programs, diversity committees and minority source guides were all useful to the newspapers in helping them understand and cover their communities. But we also heard from minority reporters how they sometimes had become the 'tool' or resource that other reporters in the newspaper relied on. In addition, editors and reporters talked about discussions taking place in their newsrooms that sometimes revealed how far they still needed to go to include diversity in the news.

To many of the editors and reporters, minority and non-minority, good reporters had to appreciate diversity in their communities, develop sources that were not the traditional ones in any group or community, and respect that race and gender did influence perspectives in the newsroom and in the news. Some editors and reporters said that reporters sometimes became too comfortable with a routine and, to really know what was going on in the community, the reporters needed to alter their routines, go into parts of the community where they normally would not go and go to different places for lunch. *James* (a Black metro editor at the Tribune newspaper) said that reporters needed to know and have a fair and balanced understanding of the cultural differences in their communities. And they needed to get out into the community if they wanted to report on them.

Several of the minority reporters said that newspapers needed to revisit their mission as 'agents of change' and to use their voice to report on those not being reported on. "Minorities want to see their faces and events in the paper; not the next shooting; not the plight of their children. (Newspapers should) try to arouse concern that these people matter, " according to *Edward* (a Hispanic columnist) at the Gannett paper.

The editor of the Tribune paper, *Darryl*, said one frustration was getting his reporters to report on issues that communities perceived to be important. He said the reporters wanted to report on issues of importance to them, but he had to make them see that they were not important to the communities. "They weren't making the connection with community. They thought, 'our job is to write about broad issues, not to connect'." He reiterated what others had said that his reporters did not reflect the communities they reported on, not only in terms of race, but also in terms of education and socioeconomic status and other beliefs. "But when you go into a community, you need to be able to relate to that community and cover communities that you're not a part of."

The minority reporters we interviewed expressed strong feelings for all newspaper personnel to leave the comfort of their offices and mingle with the communities they were trying to cover. *Nancy*, the entertainment editor at Gannett, felt that newspapers needed to improve the way reporters came up with story, "stories about diverse communities and issues won't bubble up if they come from our own limited experiences. (The stories) come up from getting out into community." As an editor, *Nancy* pushed her reporters to get out into community, but she also said that everyone, editors, not just reporters, needed more exposure to diverse cultures and communities, in particular those news people who came from majority, mainstream backgrounds. "If you don't have a diverse mixture in life - then you've got some pavement to pound."

Joyce, an African American features editor at the Knight-Ridder paper, believed it was the newspaper's duty to be reflective of how people live; to show what's the same about diverse peoples but also what's different. "It's important to write about a universal issue and use a Black person. But some people in the community still have problems with seeing Blacks illustrate a universal point." Other minority reporters said that connecting with the community meant that reporters and editors needed to question why certain stories were not getting covered, particularly stories that affected minority communities. *Margaret*, an African American and a team leader at Knight Ridder, reiterated this sentiment that stories needed to be told from a community's perspective. *Margaret* felt it was critical that reporters get away from traditional, formal sources when reporting on communities. "They need to tell the story of the neighborhoods from the perspective of the neighborhood. Sometimes reporters only deal with traditional sources in the neighborhoods; (they) need to talk to others to give the story more credibility." Along with other minority reporters and editors, *Margaret* felt there was a valid complaint about the balance of how minorities were portrayed in stories. "If you had 10 stories about Black men and they were all about them in prison and then you had one good story about Black men but it was on the inside of the E section, then the pattern of coverage was unfair and the complaint was valid." To *Margaret*, this was "benign neglect," not intentional, but nonetheless unfair.

Diversity Boot Camp

Another critical factor in practicing diversity was the diversity training and discussions that went on in the newsrooms. All of the newspapers had diversity committees and some had sent reporters to formal diversity training programs. However, some of the reporters expressed dissatisfaction with how the diversity training and conversations were implemented and frustration with the lack of support by management about the training. One important aspect of diversity training at the Knight-Ridder paper, for Louise (white editor) was to try to show that leaders made decisions based on experiences and therefore all voices needed to be heard. To her, it was important to recognize and for staff to recognize that "life experiences will influence what you bring to the table and how you see things."

Some of the reporters felt they were 'forced' to go to training sessions and, according to several Hispanic editors at the Hearst newspaper, some white reporters saw it as punishment and did not want to participate. One Latina editor, *Doris,* was discouraged by the lack of participation of upper management in the training. She said that the editor (at the time) did not attend the diversity training and she was concerned what message this sent to others. For her the ideal diversity training would be a "boot camp where people learn that they are part of a racist society, a sexist society," and she strongly felt that people at newspapers could not have an honest discussion about issues of diversity unless they acknowledged that.

Doris expressed frustration that "outwardly, sometimes the editors and non minorities express the right things; they are the first to say all the right things at meetings, but when their guard is down, they will say things that you then know things haven't changed as much." She believed there was still racism and sexism in the newsroom, and she still heard perspectives that reflected the stereotypes and biases of majority cultures. In one case that *Doris* told us about, there was a discussion in a newspaper meeting about how the newspaper could cover various aspects of culture. During the discussion, a white male reporter said, in essence, that the only culture worth talking/writing about was European, ignoring the culture of indigenous peoples. To *Doris,* this was evidence of subtle racism and how far they still had to go in newsroom conversations about covering minority cultures.

For *Doris*, the people in charge had no clue about other perspectives because they were not minorities, nor had they ever been to conventions where minority journalists met and discussed these issues, such as NABJ (National Association of Black Journalists) and

NAHJ (National Association of Hispanic Journalists). *Doris* felt strongly that her newspaper needed to make an investment in changing the views of and educating reporters who still saw things from an "Anglo-only perspective." Other minority reporters as well as non-minority reporters expressed this same view—that reporters needed to learn to appreciate diverse perspectives. But the minority reporters typically expressed a clearer and stronger desire that there needed to be honest and open discussions in their newsrooms about racism in the country and about white privilege.

Gatekeepers of Diversity

One of the most critical factors in practicing diversity, at least for the minority reporters, was who the decision makers were at the newspapers and how they implemented diversity practices in the newsrooms. Having a diverse newsroom was very important, but even more critical to the minority reporters was having a minority person in positions of editorial power at the newspaper. *Edward,* the columnist at the Gannett paper expressed this best when he said that diversity discussions had to be a part of any decision-making process and argued that diversity was not meaningful unless it was dealt with at the top.

The minority reporters at all of the newspapers expressed frustration with the daily way that 'diversity' issues might be dealt with and how slow or unfair sometimes the process seemed. Some of the reporters felt like there had to be more action on issues of diversity, particularly when a mistake or blunder occurred. Frequently what would happen when a 'crisis' or problem arose about a minority or diversity issue would be that there would be lots of tense meetings and lots of 'hurt and steam' being revealed. But to *Edward*, the real question was, "what was the action that was going to be taken to make sure the mistake didn't happen again?" To him, it was important that reporters and community members see some steps being done to correct mistakes and rectify them, not just talk about diversity and hurt feelings.

Minority and non-minority reporters and editors believed that as the numbers of minorities grew in newsrooms, the comfort level would increase, more of these conversations would occur and more people would be speaking out on these issues. But for many of the minority reporters and editors, change was not happening fast enough and they were becoming frustrated by the pace of change and sometimes by how they had in some cases were becoming tired with the 'fight'. *Doris,* for example, had working in newspapers for 18 years and she frequently had been in her words, the "lone Latina and the lone voice on issues of diversity." In fact, in the past when she had been combatant and more outspoken, reporters and editors at the newspapers had marginalized her. *Doris*, as time went on, learned to monitor what she said and she would have measured conversations. To her working at the newspaper had meant she was, "an edited version of myself" - a sense of not being able to be oneself except with family and certain colleagues.

Many of the minority reporters reiterated this sentiment: numbers were improving and progress in covering communities was happening, but there was a need for minority gatekeepers to check stories and make sure that stereotypes, offensive language and offensive images were caught and edited out of the newspaper. At every newspaper we interviewed, we heard stories where minority reporters felt that having a senior minority editor or gatekeeper would have prevented some offensive language or photograph or headline from making its way into the newspaper and offending the community and minority reporters alike. Sometimes, in the absence of a person of color in a position of power, the minority reporters found themselves sometimes serving as spokesperson for the minority community and also then as a spokesperson for the newspaper to the minority community. Most of the reporters did not mind serving in this role, but all were offended by tokenism of any type in terms of questions about race or minorities.

James said that sometimes Black reporters had gotten angry at him for sending them only into Black communities and sometimes the community had gotten mad for sending out a Black reporter, asking him "Why do you only send a Black reporter to report on us?" But *James* believed that the reporter had to have trust in the community, not just be matched up. "Diversity does affect the framing of the story."

Doris actually encouraged people to come talk with her about issues and was not offended by that. For her, the problem was that reporters did not do that often enough and they sometimes "don't question how they're doing something…. (they) aren't leading the examined life." Several minority reporters did not mind being asked about diversity issues, but they were offended if the only time they were asked a question would be if it involved a "Black issue" or a minority issue. *Margaret*, at Knight-Ridder felt it was okay to turn to minorities to ask them questions, "but if you only turn to a minority person to discuss minority issues, then that's not valuing the whole person." Other minority reporters said they would rather be personally offended by the question then let the offensive story or portrayal be put into the paper and offend an entire community.

A final gatekeeper of diversity at the newspapers was the minority affairs or minority issues reporters. But many of the reporters and editors were uncomfortable with this designation because they worried it meant that the newspaper did not need to incorporate minority issues into the mainstream sections of the newspaper. In some cases, the minority affairs reporter would not be consulted about a story even if the story were about a minority community if the story's reporter did not think it was a 'minority issue'. As *Edward* at the Gannett paper said, "Everyone should be a diversity reporter; you shouldn't just have to have **'a'** diversity reporter." The editor of the Knight-Ridder paper, *Louise*, also felt strongly that "it's not just the job of the minority affairs reporter to make the newspaper diverse."

We spoke with several reporters who had been or were now 'minority affairs reporters' and all saw their role as being broader than only covering minority issues. They also expressed frustration at not being asked or consulted on issues they thought they might have been able to help. The minority affairs reporter at the Hearst newspaper was a Hispanic female (*Sheila*) and her beat was to find stories on women's issues, poverty issues and housing. In some ways, *Sheila* felt that having a minority issues reporter was demeaning. It allowed the newspaper to fall into the trap of having only her write about or pay attention to minority issues. That sometimes meant that other reporters were released from having to cover those issues.

Hiring and Promoting a Diverse Staff

A final critical factor in implementing diversity was how a diverse staff was cultivated through hiring and promotion practices. Several of the reporters, both minority and non-minority said that there was sometimes resentment on the part of white reporters that all of the hires at the newspapers were minority hires. Other editors felt that one explanation for why minorities were not moving up at their newspaper was because they left to go to bigger newspapers before a promotion opportunity could come up. But several minority reporters and editors expressed frustration with what they believed were the same old lines they had always heard about why minorities were not being hired or why they were not promoted. *James* (Black editor) at the Tribune paper acknowledged that minorities might leave the paper, but he said that was partly due to the lack of opportunities to advance, because "no one moves out of positions; there's been no reorganization to open up positions. Everyone gets locked in. If minority reporters and editors don't perceive a way to move up, then they move out." *James* also felt strongly that his paper was not aggressive enough in hiring minorities. "It's the same response you always hear, 'there just aren't enough qualified minorities'," even though he said he frequently submitted names of qualified minorities.

All of the reporters and editors were concerned and talked about advancement, tokenism, promotion and retention of minorities within the newspapers, and some questioned whether the newspapers had done enough to nurture and help young minority reporters. All of the minority reporters stressed the importance of mentoring young reporters, particularly young minority reporters, in order to help them succeed. Although the editors and managing editors said mentoring did happen, some said that they wanted to do more to formalize the process. *Margaret* also expressed frustration that the bar had been raised for minority reporters during the hiring process. She felt that in many cases, chances were not taken on minority reporters. "But somebody had to take a chance on a white reporter, so why not on a minority reporter?"

Summary of Findings and Conclusions

There were several critical issues that influenced the practice of diversity at these four newspapers. Through our interviews, we found that minority and non-minority reporters felt that making connections with communities in different ways was one of the most important ways that diversity could be practiced in the newspapers. For minority reporters and editors, it was especially critical that diversity or pluralism permeate all facets of the decision making process at the newspaper.

Several specific problems at these newspapers that emerged from the interviews include: the lack of a minority voice or perspective at the top where it might do some good; diversity practices not being implemented quickly enough, consistently enough; and the frustration with what the minority reporters and editors see as being the "same old excuses" about unqualified minority applicants when no minorities are hired. There was widespread criticism of the way in which the newspapers were not really aggressively pursuing minority hires, and minority reporters and editors expressed frustration that there seemed to be no ramifications and no consequences for a reporter or editor when he or she put offensive, derogatory comments into the paper. All of the reporters and editors expressed dissatisfaction with the 'minority issues reporter' set up; they appreciated the attention being given to the issue but felt it ghettoized diversity issues. All of the minority affairs reporters that we interviewed were frustrated either by the restrictions placed on what they were supposed to cover or with reporters who did not ask for their help or their input on issues concerning minority communities. Minority reporters were united in their belief that mentoring of minority reporters needed to be institutionalized and formalized at their newspapers. Also minority reporters saw a discrepancy in how good old boys networks had worked for white reporters but that now the bar was continually being raised for minority reporters. Finally, all reporters felt that diversity issues were broader than minority issues; many of the reporters and editors believed everyone in the newsroom (from clerk to top editor) needed to expose himself or herself to the people in all of the communities that they served and wrote about.

We began this research with an interest in exploring some of the critical issues for reporters and journalists trying to practice diversity. Through our interviews with journalists at four newspapers, we found that implementing and practicing diversity is sometimes a daily struggle for news personnel. All of the editors and reporters we talked with were in agreement about the importance of including different voices and perspectives in their newspapers. But they varied greatly in the importance they attached to including these different voices and in their perspectives on the best ways to include and incorporate diversity in their newspapers.

The newspapers studied here did not appear to follow one 'diversity model' (as proposed by Thomas and Ely) over the others. In some ways, the daily acts of dealing with diversity seemed to move from one end of the continuum of a diversity model to the other end. Sometimes the editors and reporters we talked with would speak of the 'business imperative' of including minorities and women in the newsroom and in the news stories, reflecting Thomas' and Ely's discrimination and fairness model where numbers are key. Practices such as zoning or the designation of a 'minority issues' reporter appear to fall into the access and legitimacy model, where a company accepts differences in order to market the product (in this case, the news) to different groups. At other times, the reporters and editors we talked with would speak more philosophically about diversity issues and reflect Thomas' and Ely's new diversity paradigm: reflecting the voices and perspectives of the minority reporters in all parts of the organization. Overall, however, information from the interviews revealed that all of the newspapers were still at the more 'surface' approach to diversity, concerned more with the number of hires they have in minority positions. What seems to be slower in coming at all four newspapers is the qualitative measures of diversity: a minority perspective in power to make critical decisions; minority perspectives being allowed to come through all stories that might concern a minority community, and diversity issues and diverse perspectives having the potential to infuse all newspaper stories and all sections of these four newspapers. Our findings are, of course, not generalizable to other newspapers, rather they tell us something about the process of implementing diversity practices at these four newspapers. However, our findings also suggest other ways we might understand diversity issues and how they are practiced at newspapers.

Earlier research has explored how issues such as ethics are passed along in newsrooms from reporters to reporters. McCullough (1984) said that "because journalists are storytellers and gossip mongers," these stories, or "parables" would be passed along and would serve to "shape the behavior of journalists" (p. 31). In our study and from our interviews with the journalists at these newspapers, we also heard 'stories' or parables that illustrated the failures and successes of trying to incorporate diversity into daily newsroom practices. At each newspaper, these were the stories that the reporters and editors would tell over and over to us to illustrate some point (either positive or negative) about diversity and inclusion. The stories not only revealed the difficulties with weaving inclusion and respect for diversity into daily news practices, but they also provided places where the journalists would then tell us what the 'moral' of the story was, or what the solution to this problem would have been. One area of interest to us would be to study how these parables help inform younger journalists about the practices of diversity at a newspaper in conjunction with (or sometimes in contrast to) the stated diversity policies at newspapers.

For us, the information from this exploratory research suggests ways in which we might continue to study diversity in newsrooms and its influence on content. Using the information from our study of these newspapers, we are working on research comparing the influence of corporate policies at these newspapers on the content of the newspapers. In addition, we would also like to compare how having women and minorities in top editorial positions influences the use of diverse sources in stories at these newspapers.

Appendix 1

Questions Asked or Areas Covered in the Interviews

1. Summary of programs they've been using

   a. What led to implementation?
   b. Research on these areas?
   c. Consultation with other programs?

2. Personnel involved or committees formed.
3. Hiring practices: Programs, recruitment, retention issues, levels affected?
4. Who are their readers? Demographics?
5. Who do they want to read the paper? What communities are targeted in their diversity programs? Why? Are there issues that would not be covered if the community did not bring them to their attention?
6. How are reporting assignments made? Who do they send to cover their various communities?
7. What are their reasons for diversifying? In hiring? In covered issues?
8. Impact on content? Readers? Reaction to paper? Letters to the editor? If they get a complaint about racial or gender bias, what do they do?
9. How do they assess the impact of their programs? How do they use outside groups (community or professional) in helping them with diversity issues?
10. Do they encourage editors, reporters to attend conferences or workshops on diversity?
11. Successes and failures?

Appendix 2

Journalists Interviewed

Newspaper	Title	Race Ethnicity	Gender	Pseudonym *=not quoted
Tribune	Editor	White	Male	Darryl
Tribune	Managing Editor	White	Female	Diane
Tribune	Staff Developmnt & Section Editor	White	Male	Walter
Tribune	Section/Metro Editor	Black	Male	James
Tribune	Columnist/Head of diversity cmte.	Latina	Female	*
Tribune	Topics Editor: Health & Science Head of community outreach cmte.	White	Male	*
Tribune	Topics Editor: Media Head of readership cmte.	Filipina	Female	*
Tribune	Deputy Managing Ed.- News features	White	Male	*
Hearst	Asst. Managing Editor/News	Latino	Male	Charles
Hearst	Features Editor	Latina	Female	Doris
Hearst	Reporter/Minority Issues	Latina	Female	Sheila
Hearst	Managing Editor	White	Male	*
Hearst	Asst. Features Editor	Latina	Female	*
Hearst	VP, Human Resources	White	Female	*
Hearst	Sports Editor	Latino	Male	*

Newspaper	Title	Race Ethnicity	Gender	Pseudonym *=not quoted
Hearst	Newsroom Manager & Metro Editor	Latino	Male	*
Hearst	Asst. Managing Editor/Features	White	Female	*
Gannett	Columnist	Latino	Male	Edward
Gannett	Entertainment Editor	Black	Female	Nancy
Gannett	Team Leader/health beat reporter	Black	Female	Julie
Gannett	Managing Editor	White	Male	*
Gannett	Reporter/former diversity reporter	Latina	Female	*
Gannett	Business Editor	White	Female	*
Gannett	City Editor	White	Male	*
Gannett	Columnist/weekend editor	Black	Male	*
Gannett	Asst. Managing Editor/News	White	Female	*
Gannett	Reporter	White	Female	*
Gannett	Reporter	Black	Female	*
Gannett	Asst. Managing Editor/Features	White	Female	*
Gannett	Art Director	White	Female	*

Newspaper	Title	Race Ethnicity	Gender	Pseudonym *=not quoted
K. Ridder	Editor	White	Female	Louise
K. Ridder	Team Leader: Story of the Moment	Black	Female	Margaret
K. Ridder	Features Editor	Black	Female	Joyce
K. Ridder	Senior Editor/Training & Recruiting	White	Male	*
K. Ridder	Public Editor	Black	Female	*
K. Ridder	Sports Editor	White	Male	*

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Newspaper

No exceptions to the rule:
The ubiquity of journalism norms throughout 29 years of environmental movement coverage

A submission to the
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Abstract

No exceptions to the rule:
The ubiquity of journalism norms throughout 29 years of environmental movement coverage

Research has suggested that the present media merger frenzy will result in one-dimensional content due to a reduced number of media outlets and pervasive cross-ownership. This research examined 1,180 articles about environmental pollution over 29 years from four very different newspapers. It was found that content was overwhelmingly skewed to be more relevant to those in upper socioeconomic classes regardless of socioeconomic readership, geographic location, specific issue or time. Heavily weighted coverage that could not have been found through random chance alone was attributed to pervasive journalistic norms.

Introduction

One of the principle points of opposition against the present media merger frenzy, is the fear that a monolithic media will create content that is one-dimensional. This prediction of what could appear in the future (or what has already befallen media), is based on a precept that past media offered a multiplicity of voices because of the sheer number of media outlets available. While there is limited research examining content from divergent media outlets over a protracted period of time on one specific issue, the widespread assumption is that smaller, alternative presses often cover issues very differently than mainstream outlets. Indeed, other limited studies have found this to be true in terms of specific journalistic practices, such as sources used. This research examines 29 years of media coverage concerning one pressing and enduring political group – the environmental movement. Further, this research examines content from a more conceptual approach of relevance within each group examined.

Content about the environmental movement and the issue of pollution were evaluated from 1,180 articles within four very different socioeconomic and geographic newspapers. This analysis aimed to uncover if there were any tangible differences between these media that would reflect each outlet's unique socioeconomic readership or geographic-specific issues. The four media selected for this study were 1) smaller newspapers that had readership from lower-socieoconomic groups in Los Angeles, California; 2) the *Los Angeles Times*, which had a significantly higher socioeconomic readership; 3) smaller newspapers that had readership from lower-socieoconomic groups in New York, New York; and 4) the *New York Times*, which had a significantly higher socioeconomic readership.

This research examined the internal influences that have been found to have some level of influence on media content. Issues such as journalist values, journalist routines, organizational structures and economic forces were evaluated as possible contributors to thematic threads within media content from similar media sources. However, the stated purpose of alternative press and non-mainstream media has long been to offer a perspective often not found in standard media fare. Thus. it would appear unlikely that media outlets, which target vastly different readers than those typically found receiving mainstream press, would experience similar levels of internal influences. Disparity in content between mainstream and alternative media outlets would be expected if divergent newspapers did, in fact, aim to serve the unique constituencies of their readership.

Before continuing on to an evaluation of internal influences on media content in general, this research will briefly review important historical events and natural disasters that impacted the environmental movement. This review is necessary to determine the types of issues that were prevalent during this period – and thus worthy of media coverage. The analysis of media content coincides with the third wave of environmentalism, roughly from 1972 until the present.

The Environmental Movement

The third wave of environmentalism began roughly three decades ago and at the turn of the twenty-first century, the label 'environmentalist' is one that almost all Americans feel comfortable with. What first brought environmental concerns to the press was unquestionably Rachel Carson's 1962 publication *Silent Spring* (Dunlap & Mertig, 1992; Schoenfeld, Meier & Griffin, 1979; Trefethen, 1975).

Carson's *Silent Spring* tied together pesticides with mother's breast milk and exposed the complexities of environmental destruction with pragmatic implications on daily life. After Carson's publication, other outside factors gave rise to an unprecedented level of media coverage and public interest in environmental issues. The two most pronounced events were the first Earth Day in 1970 and the moon landing in 1969. In 1970, what many scholars credit as the official beginning of the modern environmental movement, twenty million people participated in national Earth Day celebrations (Dunlap & Gale, 1972). Other scholars suggest that the breathtaking view of earth from the moon launched widespread interest in environmental causes (Roth, 1978; Schoenfeld, Meier & Griffin, 1979).

After Earth Day and the landing on the moon, the Arab Oil embargo of 1973 and 1974 stunned a machine-dependent United States and contributed to media's renewed interest in environmental issues . However, media interest and public opinion dropped off in the next few years. Many credit the pro-environmental Carter Administration of the late seventies with the sharp decrease in environmental activity, as activists may have believed that pressing issues were being handled by the government (Manes, 1990).

A few years later, and less than one full year before Ronald Reagan took office, the World Climate Conference agreed to examine global warming more closely (Caldwell, 1992). The basic scientific understanding of global warming — that carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels (oil, coal etc), methane from agriculture and CFC's found in ozone depleting materials block infrared radiation from escaping the earth — was gaining prominence. Directly relevant to all life on earth, this trapped radiation was found to later increase surface heat on this planet, which then raises temperatures and sea levels (Wilson, 2000). As these revelations gained more credence, they also increased the amount of environmental coverage.

In addition, President Reagan's recurrent themes of environmental deregulation for increased energy production may have led to increases in environmental reporting and environmental action (Portney, 1984). Those previously concerned about environmental issues but complacent due to their belief that government was handling the issue during the Carter administration, were suddenly frightened by the implications of a deregulatory government. This public interest in environmental issues stemming from fear of Reagan's deregulation was compounded by the non-enforcement of environmental policies by Anne Gorsuch of the Environmental Protection Agency and James Watt of the Department of the Interior (Dunlap & Mertig, 1992; Cutter et al. 1991; Dunlap, 1987; Milbrath 1984).

In addition, Gillroy and Shapiro (1986) write that several worldwide incidents managed to keep environmental issues at the forefront of the public's mind during the eighties and nineties as well. Issues surrounding contaminated groundwater; air pollution; nuclear waste disposal; controversy at the Environmental Protection Agency; oil spills such as the Exxon Valdez disaster; the catastrophe in Bhopal, India; wild life degradation and the discovery of asbestos poisoning continued to push coverage of environmental issues. Indeed, accidents may have led to a continuance of coverage during the last forty years simply because there have been so many of them. During the first five years of the eighties alone, there were 7,000 accidents involving toxic chemicals (Diamond, 1985).

The massive accidents in India and Ukraine are particularly important due to their sheer scope in devastation. Bhopal, India suffered through a catastrophic chemical leakage of methyl isocyanate (MIC) gasses from an American pesticide factory owned by Union Carbide in December of 1984. Since the original incident over 20,000 people died and over 500,000 people have been injured (Bhopal, 2001). Only two years later in April of 1986, the number four reactor in Chernobyl, Ukraine exploded. Thirty people died immediately while 15,000 people died soon afterwards. Since that time nearly 3.5 million people suffered illnesses because of radioactive contamination (Chernobyl, 2001).

These events were soon followed by an accident within the United States borders during March of 1989. An Exxon ship leaked millions of tons of oil into the Alaskan waters, which killed countless animals that lived off or in the ocean. The nation watched hours of videotape showing several species struggling for their last breath in a sea of oil. This accident clearly raised the consciousness of Americans to the environmental dangers that can remain in an economy and government dependent on oil and machinery.

These continuous national and global issues pushed environmental causes into the media spotlight fairly consistently over the period of examination. Undoubtedly, there were many local issues that unique to the area, depending upon geography. For example, in the case of this content analysis, it could be assumed that Los Angeles papers would report on automobile pollution much more than newspapers within New York City, where the overwhelming majority of the population depend on mass transit. Yet, regardless of issues with local prominence, some scholars have suggested that there are particular internal influences on media content that shape every news story. These influences have been found to differ in their *degree* depending on the specific type of media outlet.

Internal Influences on Media Content

Journalist Values

As Reese (1990) found in his seminal piece discussing a socialist at the *Wall Street Journal*, journalists must work within an occupational 'ideology'. When a reporter deviates from this norm, she or he will face an inevitable reprimand or 'repair' from within the system. However, Reese (1990) makes the argument that deviations from a journalist's occupational ideology are extremely rare due to the force that these principles have in daily routines.

Tuchman (1978) has noted that through the framework of deviance, media select certain issues only if they are congruent with news values and routines. Thus, Tuchman asserts that it is not the news topic itself that makes a subject newsworthy but its relationship to the values and routines of media. This media construction is the result of ideological, organizational, professional and individual conflicts with the news organization (Tuchman, 1978). By taking on a social constructionist perspective, it is important to examine what exactly political movements are deviating from when they generate coverage. It is within this theoretical vein that the values of journalists and the positions of social movements become so important.

Gans (1979) found that a journalist's personal values and beliefs affect how she or he frame stories and what types of stories they report. He believed that journalists hold certain values that cannot be extracted from their writing and that these values are taught to journalists through his or her education, coworkers and superiors. Journalist values were said to be ethnocentricism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderate positions, adherence to social order, and national leadership (Gans, 1979). These values can have powerful effects on the news that journalists create. Ideally, a journalist will not bring his or her own values into the newsroom. Yet, according to Gans, these values are fostered and encouraged within media. While the presence or non-presence of journalistic values is still heavily contested, still other factors are present which strongly influence media content. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) purport that values do not influence media as much as journalist routines, organizational structures and economic forces.

Journalist Routines

Routines are the patterned, repeated practices of a larger group in which a person knowingly or unknowingly participates. For the journalist, routines make up their daily pattern of collecting information. The routines journalists use "form the immediate context, both within and through which these individuals do their job" (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, 105).

In essence, journalists act as gatekeepers of information to the public. They make decisions every day that influence the information we receive. Their routines of news sources and news gathering dictate — to a large extent — what a they will choose to include in a report and what they will choose to omit. As Berkowitz (1992) suggests, the media agenda is often constructed by powerful news sources. These consistent procedures of whom to contact in news gathering consequently define what is expected in the profession and what constitutes news.

As in any occupation there are expectations of job performance and behavior. If, for example, a textbook publisher suddenly brought auto-mechanic tools to their job, an unspoken occupational routine will have been broken. These subtle, and not so subtle, nuances of job expectations are routinely rewarded and punished. If a reporter masters routine methods of newsgathering, such as asking the 'right' questions or finding the 'right' angle, they are praised for their professionalism (Tuchman, 1978).

These routines stem from standards of importance inherent within the news business, according to Shoemaker and Reese (1991). News norms are the constructs that define and distill the information which audience members want to know about. A reporter's routines are formed after they understand what is 'important' within the news itself. Shoemaker and Reese (1991) found that a story's prominence, human interest, level of controversy, unusualness, timeliness and proximity dictate the importance of a news story. These are the textbook standards of newsworthiness are taught to journalists while they are in college and are obviously subjective in nature. Each journalist must decide for their own selves if a story fits within these guidelines.

The prominence of a story is measured by the impact it has on people's lives. If a story is judged to have a high degree of impact, it is viewed as more important than other stories. Human-interest stories are valued because of the public's desired level of escapism, according to Shoemaker and Reese. In addition, controversy and conflict is important because "conflict is inherently more interesting than harmony" (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991, 91). The unusual is important because it breaks the everyday norms of society and thus is more interesting to the reader. Timeliness is a factor in news decision making because individuals want to know what is happening now in the world — not what is projected to happen in the future. Finally, the proximity of a news event is important because the closer an event or issue is to the audience, the more impact it has on their lives.

If a story does not meet one of these criterion for newsworthiness, it is simply not reported because it is ruled unimportant. However, beyond the values media workers possess and the routines they follow in their daily patterns, the organizational structures and economic forces of media have a profound impact as well.

Organizational Structures

Shoemaker and Reese found that "the personal attitudes and values of news media owners may be reflected not only in editorials and columns, but also in news and features" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991, 223). The researchers concluded that elites of news organizations not only have the power to hire and fire those that they feel do not contribute to the organization but also that they shape content through subtle suggestions within the newsroom itself.

The organizational structures of media greatly influence news content, according to Gitlin (1980). For example, Ben Bagdikian (1990) notes that an editor first must decide what is newsworthy, the reporter then must decide what is worthy of notice at the scene and then thirdly, the editor must evaluate how to frame and place the resulting story. Thus, it is important to question what standards of newsworthiness an elite editor might have from a socioeconomic standpoint.

In addition, as communication industries face tighter economic constraints, the pressures of 'producing' greatly affect the culture of the newsroom. As in recent cases from the *Boston Globe* and the *Miami Herald*, columnists can simply fabricate stories under the pressures to produce. Feasibly, reporters could also slant stories to please a dominating owner who is slashing the staff budget. The immediacy of a paycheck is just as important to the journalist as it is to the construction worker. It is naïve to think that somehow a journalist will rise above the business tactics of the real world and objectively report the news when threatened with the loss of economic income.

Thus, the ultimate control of any business lies in its owner (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). This fact does not change in the communication business. The owners have the final choice on whether or not a story should be pursued; whether the publication should produce the story; what types of news-gatherers should be hired and who should be fired. Obviously, the owner's own political ideology can become important in these decisions. While there is some movement within the occupational ideology of journalism set forth by the owners, the individual reporter must always face some form of 'repair' when deviating from strict norms (Reese, 1990). Repair from the organization can come in three different forms: distancing any threat from the work of an offending reporter; again emphasizing prevailing routines that prevent outside forces from influencing content; or marginalizing the offending reporter and the message (Reese, 1990). For many modern social movements challenging corporate interests and business tactics, the ideology of media owners is often counter to their own.

Economic Forces

An increasing amount of companies are being bought by larger corporations and owned cohesively under one large umbrella. Bagdikian (2000, viii) found that "for the first time in U.S. history, the country's most widespread news, commentary, and daily entertainment are controlled by six firms that are among the world's largest corporations, two of them foreign." While concentrated ownership undoubtedly shrinks the range of information that is allowed, cross-ownership in communications has allowed for greater potential for conflicts of interest (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).

In cross-ownership, as the possibility for conflict increases, the amount of 'acceptable' news decreases accordingly. For example, General Electric, which owns various companies in the businesses of plastics, appliances, aircraft engines, medical services, insurance, financial services, transportation and turbine machines for nuclear reactors, has joint ownership in NBC. Consequently, NBC owns television and radio stations, cable stations such as Bravo, American Movie Classics, CNBC and Court TV. Furthermore, NBC owns NBC Network News, which produces Dateline NBC, Nightside, Meet the Press and The Today Show (Miller, 1996). It does not require a suspension of logic to conclude that those on Dateline NBC may not be as prone to cover an insurance fraud of a General Electric subsidiary if they value their own employment. Similar examples of cross-ownership exist at the other two major networks — CBS and ABC. Surely, a reporter who finds corruption in a subsidiary company could face obstacles in producing a damaging piece of news. Internal cannibalizations cannot be endorsed by the elites in the business because it would mean a substantial monetary loss to a large portion of their ownings.

Another example of economic forces that shape news content comes from advertisers. If a television show or a newspaper publication receives consistent subsidy from advertisers, they could logically consider several other options before exposing a damaging attack on that advertiser or reveal an ideal that an advertiser may not support. In addition, the target of a media publication may come under scrutiny from advertisers. Chomsky and Herman (1988) suggest that advertisers will not be likely to support media content that targets audiences with decreased buying power. Thus, in many cases, advertisers can dictate the audience of news as well as the content.

These economic factors — corporate sponsorship, media ownership and advertisers — can have dramatic influences on news content. Shoemaker and Reese (1991, 167) stated in their book, *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content,* that "the greater the physical distance of the owners from the community being served, the more community interests may take a backseat to corporate and economic factors." Without an undivided interest in the surrounding community, media organizations can become indebted to corporate subsidies. This obligation can translate into altered media content.

While these internal influences are said to have a powerful point in the argument against media convergence, there are not consistent studies that examine media content over time from very different media outlets, to see if the content is actually different according to media readership. This research attempts to fill that void.

Methodology

Content Selection

Two cities were selected for examination because each city had at least two newspapers and the two newspapers in each city had the largest differences in household income readership levels across the country. This factor was significant as it monitored what those in lower socioeconomic classes were actually reading across the United States.

The two cities that meet this criteria were Los Angeles, California and New York, New York. The fact that the *New York Times* ended up being included in this study undoubtedly gives a more accurate summation of what all Americans were reading about air pollution due to the powerful influence that the *New York Times* has on other papers throughout the country (Dreier, 1982; Gans, 1979; Reese & Danielian, 1989; Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). Furthermore, both of these cities have been consistently ranked within the top ten air polluted cities over the last forty years, according to Environmental Defense (2000).

Newspapers in particular were chosen due to previous research findings that suggest it is newspapers, not television, that set the public agenda (Epstein, 1978). As McCombs (1978) wrote, newspapers tend to have a stronger agenda setting effect on the population due to their powerful influence in creating, organizing, and sustaining the public agenda. Within each city, the newspaper with the highest socioeconomic readership was first selected. The result was that the *New York Times* (daily circulation of 1,086,293) with average readers having a household income of $66,700 per year and the *Los Angeles Times* (daily circulation of 1,078,186) with average readers having a household income of $50,000 per year (McClintic, 1998) were chosen for inclusion in the study.

Within the Los Angeles area, the *San Bernardino Sun*, with an average household income of $36,400 (McClintic, 1998) was sampled. In New York City, the publication examined to represent content targeted to lower socioeconomic classes was the *New York Daily News*, with an average household income of $42,200 (McClintic, 1998) and a daily circulation of 730,761 readers. These newspapers were selected due to their relative difference in socioeconomic readership from the first two newspapers chosen — the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*. The difference in household income between the two primary New York papers was $24,500 and the difference between the two Los Angeles papers was $13,600.

As an additional component to this research, other newspapers with low socioeconomic readership were sampled within a general pool. In the Los Angeles area, listings included the *Herald Examiner* and the *Los Angeles Daily News* (daily circ. 200,387), as well as several black press newspapers, such as *the Los Angeles Herald Dispatch*, the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, the *Southeast Wave Star* and the *Southside Journal*. There is not conclusive socioeconomic data available for all of these newspapers. However, the newspaper with the highest socioeconomic readership of this group is the *Los Angeles Daily News* (average household income of $44,500), whose readers still have incomes far below those who read the *Los Angeles Times* (McClintic, 1998). The other general lower socioeconomic publications within the New York City area included the *New York Post* as well as black press newspapers titled the *New York Voice*, the *New York Beacon* and the *Amsterdam News*.

Using other low-income newspapers for this study was necessary for several reasons. Primarily, in many years there were simply not enough articles for examination. This could have been due to an actual dearth in content, but was more likely a breach in indexing the data. The only source of indexes for lower 'prestige' papers was NewsBank. However, this source was highly selective — so much so that in certain years, the preponderance of articles available were from one state in particular if a newsworthy event happened in that state. However, even if this disparity is a result of minimal coverage, nothing in agenda setting is dependent upon absolute numbers of frequency. What remains essential is that these issues were being covered in papers targeting lower socioeconomic groups, which this sample proves correct.

Articles from all of the newspapers, both upper and lower socioeconomically targeted, were retrieved if the term 'air pollution' was in the headline or lead paragraph. This was done to see if there was any linkage made by the media from pollution to the environmental organizations that fight to alleviate the problem. The issue of air pollution specifically was chosen due to the finding of several studies that pollution affects those in lower socioeconomic classes at a highly disproportionate rate (Bryant & Mohai, 1992; Bullard, 1994; Lee, 1992; Schwab, 1994; White, 1998). Thus, one would expect to find a large amount of coverage applicable to those in lower socioeconomic classes. Further, the issue of air pollution in specific, was chosen as it was a consistent theme throughout the 29-year period examined.

Articles were sampled from 1972 until 2000. The initial date was selected due to the fact that indexes for large newspapers, outside of the *New York Times,* generally began that year. In addition, other research has found that coverage of environmental issues and the environmental movement was sparse during the sixties and grew exponentially after the first Earth Day in 1970 (Schoenfeld, Meier & Griffin, 1979). Thus, examining content in the sixties would not have added much supplementary information to the study.

Two coders examined all the newspaper articles. Content from newspapers targeting lower socioeconomic classes were first collected to ascertain the number of total articles available during this period. This collection yielded an average of 12 articles per year over the 29-year period. Due to the large amount of newspaper content available from the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times,* these newspapers were randomly sampled in proportion to the amount found from lower socioeconomic newspapers. Thus, twelve articles from the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* were randomly selected, through every nth article listed, on a yearly basis. This resulted in an evaluation of 1,392 articles (696 articles from newspapers with a lower socioeconomic readership divided evenly between papers in New York and Los Angeles and 696 articles from newspapers with an upper socioeconomic readership divided evenly between the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*).

After removing editorially based pieces, the final tally of articles included for study was 1,180. From this number, 331 were from the *New York Times* and 349 were from the *Los Angeles Times*, for a total of 680 articles from an upper socioeconomic readership. The remaining 500 articles were from a lower socioeconomic newspaper (256 articles came from New York papers and 244 from Los Angeles papers). More specifically, 99 articles were from the *New York Daily News*, 40 from the *New York Post*, 56 from other New York papers and 61 from other lower socioeconomic New Jersey papers. Finally, 80 articles were from the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 34 from the *San Bernardino Sun*, 112 from the *Los Angeles Daily News*, and 18 from other lower socioeconomic California papers. The articles from general newspapers in New York, New Jersey and California with lower socioeconomic readers, were only included if they were addressing issues of New York City and Los Angeles respectively and were relatively close in geographic proximity.

Operationalization

The issue of air pollution was comprised of three main attributes: cause, effect and responsibility. Each attribute was then divided into several frames: government, industry, social movement, individual and natural. Coding was not restricted to only one frame per attribute. Rather, up to five frames per each attribute were possible (although, extremely unlikely).

Coding in this manner revealed whom the media suggested as the principal agent causing pollution; what exactly the effects have been (and on whom); and who was responsible for rectifying the situation. This proved especially important for an analysis of different socioeconomic groups. Lower socioeconomic classes have a distrust of industry and government (Howell & Fagan, 1988). The operationalization of each frame within its respective issue attribute was constructed as follows:

Causal Attribute
Government: government policy/activity/regulations as cause of environmental problems
Industry: industrial activity/products as cause of environmental problems
Social Movement: movement activity as cause of environmental problems
Individual: individual activity as cause of environmental problems
Natural: natural biological processes as cause of environmental problems

Effect Attribute
Government: environmental problem affecting government budget

Industry: environmental problem affecting industry prices, profitability, marketplace
Social Movement: environmental problem affecting movement participation, effectiveness
Individual: environmental problem affecting health, financial status, land ownership
Natural: environmental problem affecting earth

Responsibility Attribute
Government: government activity to propose/rectify environmental problems
Industry: industry activity to propose/rectify environmental problems
Social Movement: movement activity to propose/rectify environmental problems
Individual: individual activity to propose/rectify environmental problems
Natural: rectifying environmental problems naturally

Questions of relevance in media content exposed differences in socioeconomic-specific responses to environmental concerns. Specific methodological steps were taken to help reveal this phenomenon. For example, if the "individual" frame was chosen within any attribute then the precise reason for this choice was noted. This process helped reveal if particular individual frames were relevant to the lower socioeconomic individual receiving the media message. These individual frames were coded according to relevance along socioeconomic divisions. For example, effects on personal health presumably had equal relevance across all socioeconomic classes while land ownership should have more relevance with higher socioeconomic classes more than lower socioeconomic classes. While a case could be made that health effects on lower socioeconomic groups were more pronounced due to a lack of medical care, the effects themselves before treatment, were deemed equal. In addition, while health effects of pollution may manifest themselves differently in divergent classes (i.e. diabetes in African Americans versus heart disease in middle class whites), the presence of health effects itself was determined to be equal for the purposes of this study.

For individual frames, coders were given the following choices: personal health, individual auto use, disregard for non-automotive transportation such as bicycle use and walking, individual population control, smoking, improving household efficiency (heating appliances, burning wood, coal, oil or gas, water piping, foam insulation, building materials, etc.), household gardening (native plants & trees), minimizing consumable consumption, boycotting polluting businesses and other. If other was chosen, then the precise reason was noted. Within these options, personal health was viewed as applicable to all socioeconomic levels. Smoking was viewed as slightly more relevant to those in lower socioeconomic classes due to the strong inverse relationship between smoking and income in adults worldwide although clearly, there are those in all classes are smokers (Beech, Droker, Pree-Cary, Harris, 1997; World Health Organization, 1997). Individual auto use, disregard for non-automotive transportation, minimizing consumable consumption and boycotting polluting businesses was constructed as slightly more applicable and relevant to upper socioeconomic classes, due to the intrinsic availability of material options as socioeconomic status increases. Finally, improved household efficiency, household gardening, and individual population control were viewed as more relevant to upper socioeconomic classes. Household efficiency and home gardening were included in this category due to the relatively large amount of money needed for a down payment on a home and the sustained funds needed for mortgage payments. Population control was included as an issue more relevant to upper socioeconomic classes because recent research has shown that as individual incomes and education rise, birth rates drop significantly (CNN, 1999; Population Council, 2001).

In an effort to ascertain political apathy towards the issue of pollution across all socioeconomic classes, coders were asked to discern what the text suggested was the likelihood of solving pollution. Coders were given five choices along a Likert scale: extremely unlikely, unlikely, not mentioned, likely, extremely likely. Only direct mentions concerning the likelihood of solving pollution were coded.

The question of personal apathy was also fundamental in searching the text for mentions of national and/or local environmental organizations. It was presumed that by connecting political organizations with the cause itself, a stronger connection to individual and local activism could be created. If an environmental organization was mentioned in an article about pollution, then apparent tactics of the movement (corporate sponsorship, journalist liaisons, political associations, organized events, etc.) were noted to find if there was a correlation between tactics used and acquiescence with journalist values, routines, organizational structures and economic forces in media.

If coverage of a social movement was coded as negative, this position was further explicated through movement qualities noted earlier (limited opposition, reduced internal struggle, etc.) that are more relevant to those in upper socioeconomic classes. Further, negative coverage was categorized through media framing techniques (trivialization, polarization, internal dissention, etc.). This helped ascertain if coverage of these groups differed across media organizations, which was viewed as a reflection of perceived deviance within media institutions. This was important to discover if these factors helped construct a perception of environmentalism in this country that could have influenced participation within the movement.

Direct mentions of the term "activist" and "environmentalist" were coded within article content. This was completed to gain a stronger understanding of the level of individual responsibility for environmental pollution conferred by media. In addition, any articles suggesting pollution as one rooted in a struggle for civil rights were coded in this study as well as mentions of socioeconomic factors in environmental coverage. A connection between civil rights and air pollution was determined if race, individual identity or civil rights organizations were mentioned in relation to environmental destruction. Connecting air pollution to socioeconomic factors was only possible if income, specific economically divided geographic locations or education levels were mentioned. As previous research has shown, connecting social activist causes with civil rights issues of inequality generally increases involvement from lower socioeconomic classes. Again, under the guide of agenda setting, civil rights and socioeconomic factors were seen as relevant arguments for those in the lower socioeconomic strata.

Coders were also asked to determine the level of scientific jargon found in article content. Coders were given five choices: easily comprehended (never used scientific terminology); generally understood (occasional use of scientific terminology; some difficulty in comprehension (moderate use of scientific terminology; difficult to understand (frequent use of scientific terminology); or extremely difficult to comprehend (heavy use of scientific terminology). It was suggested that as the level of scientific language increased, the issue became more relevant to those in upper socioeconomic classes due to the conflation of education and income in the United States.

Finally, coders evaluated the general focus of the article. Coders were provided eight options for this macro-level, thematic frame. Their choices were government regulation, political debate, judicial legislation, health hazard, scientific study, individual behavior, public protest or other.

Results

Frequencies

The analysis of 1,180 articles between two coders generated a high 91.25 percent inter-coder reliability score for media attributes. Scott's Pi was computed at .60, representing the inter-coder agreement after chance has been removed. While still generating a far higher number than what would be expected by chance alone, the somewhat lower Pi score was as much a reflection of heavily weighted cases within the categorical variables (as was the case in this study) as it was a removal of chance from the inter-coder reliability percentage (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998). For example, when one assumes an even dispersion of cases within the twenty variables coded for this analysis (i.e. a dichotomous variable would assume a .5 probability for each of the two cases), Scott's Pi increases to .88.

As the unit of analysis, newspaper articles were dispersed fairly equally across upper and lower socioeconomic papers. This sample was purposively collected to examine differences in both geography and socioeconomic readership. Thus, the equal dispersion is a reflection of the sampling scheme. Twenty eight percent of articles came from the *New York Times*, which represented content targeting upper socioeconomic classes within the first market. The newspapers with lower socioeconomic readers in the New York area (*New York Daily News*, 8.4; *New York Post*, 3.4; other, 9.9) comprised roughly twenty two percent of total articles. Twenty one percent of articles sampled came from lower socioeconomic newspapers within the Los Angeles area (*Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 6.8; *San Bernardino Sun*, 2.9; *Los Angeles Daily News*, 9.5; other, 1.5). Finally, 29 percent of the articles reviewed for the content analysis came from the *Los Angeles Times*.

All articles sampled were coded along three attribute dimensions: cause, effect and responsibility. Industry was found to be the overwhelming cause of pollution within the United States (72.9 percent). The standard error of this proportion was .009, suggesting that the 'industry' cause frame in the general media population could be as high as 73.8 percent or as low as 72 percent. The relatively small standard error of proportion (SE(p)) found throughout this study was a reflection of the large sample size and the lack of variability in case values (Riffe, Lacy & Fico, 1998).

A majority of 59.1 percent (SE(p)=.0101) of content suggested 'neutral' effects of the air pollution problem. The effects dimension of air pollution produced the largest percentage of 'individual' frames with 31.3 percent. Only 7.7 percent of newspaper content framed the earth or other natural phenomenon as experiencing the effects of air pollution.

Government was framed as the responsible agent for air pollution in 78.7 percent (SE(p)=.0084) of content. Of this small 'individual' percentage, frames were divided among 'auto use' (16.7 percent, SE(p)=.1522) and 'minimizing consumable goods' and 'boycotting businesses' (33.33 percent each, SE(p)=.1922).

A near totality of content found absolutely no mention of any solutions for air pollution (95.4 percent, SE(p)=.0043). Ninety percent of articles (SE(p)=.0061) did not mention local environmental organizations while eighty three percent (SE(p)=.0077) of articles did not mention national environmental organizations. If national environmental movements were mentioned in content about air pollution, it was almost exclusively as a brief mention without any accompanying information. In fact, 99 percent of content (SE(p)=.0041) that mentioned a national environmental organization was coded as 'neutral.'

Movements were found to 'mainstream their views' in 3.3. percent of coverage. Organized events (2.2 percent) and an 'expanded political terrain' (2.1 percent) comprised the bulk of remaining content. Ninety-nine percent of content (SE(p)=.0006) did not suggest any unique qualities of the environmental movement as a whole.

Ninety eight percent of content (SE(p)=.0026) did not mention the term 'activist.' Further, eighty five percent (SE(p)=.0072) of content did not use the term 'environmentalist.' Civil rights and socioeconomic class factors were not mentioned in almost all of the content covering 29 years (99.8 percent, SE(p)=.0009 and 98.7 percent, SE(p)=.0023 respectively).

Fifty-five percent of language (SE(p)=.0102) was coded as easy and 40.7 percent (SE(p)=.0101) as generally understandable. Finally, the general macro frame of newspaper articles over 29 years of air pollution coverage was found to be government regulation (52.1 percent, SE(p)=.0102). Scientific studies (11.1 percent), judicial legislation (6.7 percent) and other frames (16.9 percent) comprised the bulk of remaining air pollution macro-frames.

Remaining content was found to promote general apathy: 95.4 percent of coverage did not mention any solution to pollution; 90 percent did not mention local environmental organizations; 83 percent did not mention national environmental organizations; 99 percent of coverage that did address environmental organizations did so in a neutral frame; 98 percent of coverage did not mention the term 'activist'; and 85 percent did not mention the term 'environmentalist'.

In sum, coverage attributes were found to be overwhelmingly relevant to upper socioeconomic individuals in particular in all media outlets: 72.9 percent of coverage suggested industry as the cause of pollution; 58.4 percent of individual cause frames suggested 'auto use' as the individual cause of pollution; 59.1 percent found neutral effects of pollution; 78.7 percent framed government as the responsible agent; individual responsibility frames were divided between auto use, minimizing consumable goods and boycotting businesses as the individual responsibilities of pollution; the majority of environmental organizations mentioned in the content were entrenched in political system; 99.8 percent of coverage did not mention civil rights; 98.7 percent of coverage did not mention socioeconomic class factors; and 52.1 percent of articles presented the general macro frame as government regulation. Only two variables contradicted this overwhelming socioeconomic bias within media content. The first was the language difficulty measure, which found that 55 percent of content was easy to understand. The second was the individual effect attribute dimension of pollution that found 98.9 percent of effects within the attribute to be personal health.

Associations

An examination of the relationship between collapsed coded variables and two newspaper categories according to geography (New York and Los Angeles region), found six significant relationships with very weak strength between the two variables and no measurable effects (30 percent), one relationship was found significant with actual strength between the two variables (5 percent), eleven insignificant relationships between variables (55 percent), and two relationships that could not be measured due to skewed data uniformly across all newspapers (10 percent).

The relationship between collapsed coded variables and two newspaper categories according to socioeconomic readership levels (high socioeconomic readership and low socioeconomic readership) found five significant relationships with very weak strength between the two variables and no measurable effects (25 percent), no relationships with actual strength between the two variables (0 percent), thirteen insignificant relationships between variables (65 percent), and two relationships that could not be measured due to uniformly skewed data across all newspapers sampled (10 percent).

Thus, all relationships except one that found strength between aggregated demonstrated movement tactics and geographical area of publication, found either no relationship between variables, weak relationships between variables with no measurable effects or could not be computed due to heavily skewed data across all newspapers. Non-collapsed 2 x 2 tables found no measurable significant relationships and only six (30 percent) weak relationships with no measurable effects. Collapsed data across geography found the only strong and significant relationship (5 percent), and six (30 percent) weak relationships were found that demonstrated no measurable effects. Collapsed data across socioeconomically different newspapers found no measurable significant relationships and only five (25 percent) weak relationships with no measurable effects. Computation of significance in relationships with no measurable effects were attributed to the large sample size. Thus, if a relationship found significance but showed only very weak effects on variables coded, it was concluded that no meaningful relationship existed.

In comparing these overwhelming frequencies across newspapers, the data was translated into the following categories:

Newspaper associations	**Significance**	**Area**
Causal attribute dimension	*Weak*	*Geography*
Effect attribute dimension	*None*	
Responsibility attribute dimension	*Weak*	*Geography*
Individual cause frames	*Weak*	*Socioeconomic Readership*
Individual effect frames	*None*	
Individual responsibility frames	Not interpretable	
Solution likelihood	*Weak*	*Geography & Socioeconomic Readership*
Local environmental org	*Weak*	*Geography*
National environmental org	*Weak*	*Socioeconomic Readership*
Movement tactic	**Strong**	**Geography**
Type of coverage	*None*	
Negative coverage frames	Not interpretable	
Movement qualities	Not interpretable	
Movement quality frames	*None*	
Activist mentions	*Weak*	
Environmentalist mentions	*Weak*	*Socioeconomic Readership*
Civil rights	*None*	
Socioeconomic factors	*None*	
Language difficulty	*Weak*	*Geography*
Macro-frame	*Weak*	*Socioeconomic Readership*

Thus, from the twenty statistically measurable relationships between coded variables and four newspaper categories (*New York Times*, New York low S.E.S., *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles low S.E.S), six were found significant but showed very weak strength in relationships and no measurable effects between variables (30 percent), no relationships were found that showed actual strength between variables (0 percent), two were found insignificant (6.6 percent), and twelve were not interpretable because of heavily weighted data — demonstrating extreme uniformity across papers (60 percent).

Finally, the three central attribute dimensions that were coded (cause, effect and responsibility), were found to be extremely similar across newspapers (Table 1). For example, the largest difference between papers along any frame within an attribute dimension was 3.3 percent.

Table 1

Synopsis of Attribute Dimensions Across Newspapers

Attribute Dimensions	**NY Times**	**NY (Low SES)**	**LA Times**	**LA (Low SES)**
Cause				
Neutral	4.7%	3.4%	5.9%	6.3%
Government	.8%	1.0%	1.2%	.7%

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Industry	25.3%	24.9%	24.0%	22.5%
Social Mvmt	0%	0%	0%	0%
Individual	2.2%	3.7%	.6%	2.3%
Natural	.1%	.1%	1.4%	1.3%
Effect				
Neutral	21.5%	18.4%	18.2%	20.6%
Government	.3%	.5%	.1%	.1%
Industry	.4%	.5%	.1%	0%
Social Mvmt	0%	.1%	0%	0%
Individual	8.4%	11.6%	11.0%	10.9%
Natural	2.5%	2.0%	3.6%	1.5%
Responsibility				
Neutral	4.8%	3.9%	7.1%	5.0%
Government	27.2%	27.5%	24.6%	25.7%
Industry	.9%	1.5%	.8%	1.6%
Social Mvmt	.2%	.3%	.1%	0%
Individual	0%	0%	0%	.2%
Natural	0%	0%	.4%	.6%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**
Column N	**1992**	**1536**	**2082**	**1470**
Total N = 7080				

Indeed, while this research does not allow for an examination of which news outlet actually set the agenda for the other, it clearly indicates that there was strong homogeneity across papers. Differences in total percents across dimensions between newspapers were extremely small. The largest difference between papers was only +/-.5 percent (Table 2).

Table 2
Percentage of Differences in Attribute Dimensions Across Newspapers

	New York (Low SES)	**Los Angeles Times**	**Los Angeles (Low SES)**
New York Times	-0.1	0.5	0
NY (Low SES)		0.3	0.1
Los Angeles Times			-0.2

Perhaps even more striking is the summation of data through a Spearman rank correlation coefficient (Rho). The correlation between papers is almost a perfect score of 1 (Table 3), reflecting almost total agreement across geography and across socioeconomic readership.

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Table 3
Spearman's Rho of Attribute Dimensions Across Newspapers

	New York (Low SES)	Los Angeles Times	Los Angeles (Low SES)
New York Times	.9737	.9601	.9759
NY (Low SES)		.9576	.9704
Los Angeles TImes			.9771

Discussion

No substantive longitudinal data tracking environmental participation among various socioeconomic groups exists. However, several different studies have found exclusively consistent upper socioeconomic membership throughout the last three decades. The conclusion from these varying studies is that the mainstream environmental movement continues to be overwhelmingly white and middle to upper class (Freudenberg & Steinsapir, 1992; Gottlieb, 1993; Morrison, 1973; Morrison & Dunlap, 1986; Tremblay and Dunlap, 1978).

However, environmental concern from African Americans and other minority groups has been found to be as high or higher than European Americans. Mitchell (1979) found 64 percent of blacks and 63 percent of whites were sympathetic with the environmental movement. In 1982, the Roper Organization found that 44 percent of African Americans believed that environmental regulation should be expanded — this was in contrast to only 36 percent of white respondents. In addition, Mohai (1990) found that blacks are as concerned or even more concerned about environmental issues as their white counterparts. Finally, the National Opinion Research Center found that in every single year from 1973 until 1988 more blacks than whites believed that the nation spends 'too little money' on environmental protection (Mohai, 1990). During the eighties and nineties, cohesive longitudinal studies reexamined concern among various socioeconomic classes and concluded that while activists are "drawn disproportionately from the upper-middle class, concern tends to cut across all socioeconomic categories" (Mohai, 1985, 821).

Thus, while several other factors may be at work in keeping participation numbers low, such as Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs, elites already involved in the movement (Bullard & Wright,

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1989; Taylor, 1989), and a lack of attention to civil rights within the movement (Bullard, 1990), media representation of environmental issues as extremely monolithic may be an integral component of this complex problem.

This representation is crucial to an environmental movement that has increasingly addressed issues pertinent to an extensive cross-section of society (Van Liere & Dunlap, 1980). In the broadest sense, those in the lower socioeconomic classes suffer the most from health problems that are caused or exacerbated by environmental problems (Eckholm, 1977). It could certainly be argued that those in the bottom socioeconomic strata presumably have the largest stake in environmental improvement in whatever form that takes. However, much of this information has remained untold in smaller, alternative presses purported to address the concerns of their readers.

Heavily weighted coverage that could not have been found through random chance alone was documented through both the runs test and the binomial test. These tests indicated an overwhelming skew in the data among *all* dichotomous variables. The overwhelming frequency of certain frames was pervasive among all different types of newspapers. This finding suggested that coverage was in some way biased and statistically 'unfair.'

All but one of the relationships between newspapers and coded variables found either no relationship, weak relationships between variables that showed no actual effects or data could not be computed due to heavily skewed data uniformly across all newspapers. It is important to reiterate here that the large sample size was certain to inflate even the weakest relationships that showed no real effect between variables.

Indeed, regardless of socioeconomic readership, geographic location, specific issue or time, coverage concerning the environmental movement was relatively unchanging. Through the longitudinal data collected, claims as to the ubiquity of this conclusion were possible. Four different newspaper types, each with distinct socioeconomic readership and geographic location, all had remarkably similar local coverage. Locality is important in this framework because there were certainly singular issues that each paper was dealing with, but yet all newspapers showed a rather monolithic presentation of the environmental movement and of air pollution. In fact, the majority of dimensions coded had frames encompassing over ninety percent of coverage throughout 29 years.

One of the principle points of opposition against the present media merger frenzy, is the fear that a monolithic media will create content that is one-dimensional. This prediction of what could appear in the future, is based on a possible misconception that past media offered a multiplicity of voices because of the sheer number of media outlets available. An overwhelming uniformity across geographic boundaries, across divergent issues and topics, and across socioeconomic levels of readership was found in this research. Whether the coverage was from a small alternative press, or the *New York Times*, the content was unchanging. This could only be explained by a pervasive strength in journalist norms, routines and values. In this case, the norms of journalism played a stronger role in defining environmental coverage than did the readership market, the geographic location or the specific issues addressed.

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News from Afghanistan: how five U.S. newspapers covered the Taliban before Sept. 11, 2001

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Abstract: News stories about the Taliban in the five years before Sept. 11, 2001, were examined in *The Boston Globe, Columbus Dispatch, Plain Dealer, Tampa Tribune* and *Washington Post*. Of 278 news stories, 181 were in *The Post*. Excluding *The Post*, the four other newspapers ran an average of 4.5 stories on the Taliban each year. This study confirms *The Post's* elite status but also confirms fears that international news coverage in U.S. newspapers is inadequate.

A paper presented in August 2002 to the Newspaper Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.

Over the past decade, media critics have despaired over the declining amount of international news coverage appearing in the United States' newspapers.[1] They argue that because the United States is a superpower and a democracy relying on self-government, Americans need to be better informed about world events. "For the country to be engaged in the world, Washington needs a public that understands the issues. Especially in times of war, disaster and economic upheaval, a democracy's foreign policy is dependent upon public support," writes George Krimsky.[2] He and others have suggested the media need to work harder to show how global issues affect the United States.[3] Furthermore, John Hughes wrote in 1997, although the Cold War is over, regional crises persist: "If the American people are to make intelligent judgments about them – and on such issues as when and where the United States should intervene – our foreign press corps, like our military, needs to be expert, well-positioned and well-supplied with resources."[4] In 1998, Patricia Ellis of the Women's Foreign Policy Group specifically cited terrorism as an example of an international news issue with domestic implications.[5]

Those implications became all too clear Sept. 11, 2001, when terrorists forced American airliners to crash into the twin towers of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania, killing more than 3,000 people.[6] The U.S. government has since waged a war on terrorism and launched a military campaign in Afghanistan targeting Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorist network, as well as the Taliban, the Afghan rulers who allowed bin Laden to stay in Afghanistan rather than face trial in the United States after the 1998 bombings of two U.S. embassies in East Africa.[7] The events of Sept. 11 shocked the world, but they also prompted many Americans to enroll, in effect, in a crash course on Afghanistan, the Taliban and Osama bin Laden, subjects about which many Americans likely were not well-informed.

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[1] Daniel Riffe, Charles F. Aust, Ted C. Jones, Barbara Shoemake and Shyam Sundar (summer 1994), "The shrinking foreign newshole of the New York Times," *Newspaper Research Journal* 15(3): 74-89; Michael Emery (fall 1989), "An Endangered Species: The International Newshole," *Freedom Forum Media Studies Journal* 3(4): 151-164; John Maxwell Hamilton and George A. Krimsky (fall 1989), " 'Juju' News from Abroad," *Freedom Forum Media Studies Journal* 3(4): 137-150; Peter Arnett (1998), "Goodbye, World," *American Journalism Review*, November 1998: 50-67; and Ed Seaton, "The Diminishing Use of Foreign News Reporting," May 26, 1998 speech before the International Press Institute, found at http://www.asne.org/ideas/seatonmoscow.htm (22 February 2002).

[2] "Why newspapers should cover the world," in *Bringing the World Home: Showing Readers Their Global Connections: A Newsroom Handbook*, Reston, Va.: American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1999, p. 10.

[3] See, for example, Richard Mial, "Keep eye on the world," *The Masthead*, Winter 1997: 23-24; Hamilton, "Foreign Affairs at Home: Far Too Few Reporters and Editors Try to Trace World Events to Main Street America," *Nieman Reports*, Fall 1991: 9-10; and Richard Lambert, "Business News and International Reporting," *Media Studies Journal*, Spring/Summer 1999: 78-81.

[4] John Hughes, "From Journalism's Summit, a Note of Warning," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 12, 1997.

According to Bernard C. Cohen, "The world looks different to different people, depending not only on their personal interests, but also on the map that is drawn for them by the writers, editors, and publishers of the papers they read."[8] Cohen's words, written in 1963, seem apropos today. What did the world look like to most Americans before Sept. 11? Did most Americans have a working knowledge of Afghanistan and the Taliban? Did they understand the connection between the Taliban and Osama bin Laden? Lippmann astutely noted in 1922 that the "pictures inside people's heads do not automatically correspond with the world outside," and that those pictures are often based on what individuals have read and heard.[9]

Given the criticism previously leveled at U.S. newspapers over their increasingly limited international news coverage, one wonders, then, how much information newspapers supplied their readers about the Taliban *before* the terrorist attacks of Sept.

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[5] Patricia Ellis, "Looking the Other Way: The attitude that the rest of the world is irrelevant to U.S. concerns imperils democracy," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, Feb. 20, 1998, Opinion page.

[6] Margaret Talbot, "The lives they lived: 3,225 (at last count), D. Sept. 11, 2001," *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 2001, Section 6, 16.

[7] Ahmed Rashid (Spring 2001), "Afghanistan: Ending the Policy Quagmire," *Journal of International Affairs* 54(2): 395-410.

[8] Bernard C. Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 13.

11, 2001. This study will examine the news coverage of the Taliban in five major American newspapers over the five-year period leading up to Sept. 11, 2001, to gain insight into what Americans could have learned about the Taliban from reading their daily newspapers before the tragedy.

The Taliban, a radical Islamic movement headed by former *mujahidin* -- freedom fighters who resisted the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that began in 1979 and ended in 1989 -- launched a campaign in 1994 to defeat the country's warlords and impose their Islamic beliefs[10]. The Taliban captured the Afghan capital of Kabul in September 1996 – the month this study begins. The U.S. government initially supported the Taliban because it saw the movement as a means to restore order to a war-torn country. However, the "Taliban quickly became an embarrassment and a liability,"[11] as "their atrocious human rights record and treatment of women drew international scorn."[12] The Taliban further raised the ire of the U.S. government by refusing to extradite bin Laden who was suspected to be the mastermind of the 1998 embassy bombings and then the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. "Since 1998, the hunt for bin Ladin has been the driving force behind U.S. policy toward Afghanistan,"[13] and yet, this study will show, U.S. news coverage of the Taliban, bin Laden's host, has often been minimal.

Literature review

Based on previous studies examining international news coverage in American newspapers, as well as the flow of international news between countries, one might not expect

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[9] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1922, p.19.

[10] U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Afghanistan," www.state.gov/r/pa/bgn/5380pt.htm (accessed March 27, 2002).

[11] Rashid, 397.

[12] Milton Bearden (November/December 2001), "Afghanistan: Graveyard of Empires," *Foreign Affairs* 80(6): 26-27.

[13] Bearden, 28.

much news about Afghanistan to appear in U.S. newspapers. In 1970, Gerbner and Marvanyi found that the nine U.S. newspapers they studied published an average of about 25 international news items, taking up an average of 518 column inches, each day.[14] Nearly two decades later, Hess found that on a typical day in 1989, 20 American newspapers published an average of 4.5 international-dateline stories.[15] Overall, studies have indicated that anywhere from 10.2 percent in 1971 to less than 3 percent of the news space in the 1990s is devoted to international news.[16] Absent a major crisis, such as the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on Sept. 11, 2001, and the United States' ongoing "war on terrorism," some media critics and industry leaders have criticized the international coverage in the United States' small and midsize papers as grossly insufficient.[17] Furthermore, they blame the decline on the end of the Cold War, which had helped provide "basic, enduring, organizing principles for selecting and reporting international events," *Foreign Affairs,* [18] as well as media companies' quest for profits that has meant spending less on newsgathering overseas.[19]

In addition to documenting the quantity of international news, researchers have found that the likelihood of news coverage is influenced by a country's status on the world stage,[20] its cultural ties to the United States,[21] its geographic and cultural proximity to the United States,[22] its level of press freedom and the presence of an international news agency,[23] and its level of economic development.[24] In addition, news events with a high degree of normative deviance -- that is, events that break U.S. norms -- have also been found to be more likely to receive news coverage, as are events or issues with which the United States is involved.[25] Similarly, a study of international media found that the Associated Press and UPI were the most likely of other media to ignore other regions unless the United States was directly or indirectly involved.[26]

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[14] George Gerbner and George Marvanyi (Winter 1977), "The Many Worlds of the World's Press," *Journal of Communication* 27:52-66.

[15] Stephen Hess, *International News & Foreign Correspondents*, Washington: The Brookings Institution, 93.

[16] Seaton, "Diminishing Use of Foreign News," and Emery, "Endangered Species."

[17] Arnett, "Goodbye, World," and Seaton.

[18] Jack Lule (Spring 1997), "News Values in a New World: A Burkean Analysis of The New York Times in Haiti, 1994-96, *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 21(1): 4. See also, Henry A. Grunwald (summer 1993), "The post-Cold War press: a new world needs a new journalism," Foreign *Affairs* 72(3): 12-16.

[19] "The Decline of International News Coverage," *Media Studies Center*, Feb. 20, 1997, panel discussion.

[20] Tsan-Kuo Chang, Tuen-yu Lau and Hao Xiaoming (2000), "From the United States with News and More: International Flow, Television Coverage and the World System," *Gazette* 62(6): 505-522.

[21] John Lent (Winter 1977), "Foreign News in American Media," *Journal of Communication* 27: 46-51; and Gerbner and Marvanyi, "Many Worlds of the World's Press."

[22] Melissa A. Johnson (1997), "Predicting news flow from Mexico," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 74(2): 315-331.

Critics also have been concerned about what they see as a tendency for negative news stories to predominate international news coverage,[27]and some scholars have found that tendency to be especially prevalent in coverage of the developing world,[28] which receives limited coverage as it is.[29] "In the Western press the South continues to be a neglected part of the globe, with only fleeting interest for wars, disasters, and the like,"[30] wrote Hans Donck in a study about coverage of Africa in Dutch papers. In examining the international news coverage in 38 countries, Hu noted that if one is not a country with "enormous economic and political clout," the only way to get international news coverage is "to have some large-scale disruptive incidents."[31]

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[23] H. Denis Wu, "Systemic Determinants of International News Coverage: A Comparison of 38 Countries," *Journal of Communication*, Spring 2000, 110-130.

[24] Wu, "Systemic Determinants of International News Coverage."

[25] Chang, Pamela Shoemaker and Nancy Brendlinger (August 1987), "Determinants of International News Coverage in the U.S. Media," *Communication Research* 14(4): 396-414.

[26] Zixue Tai (2000), "Media of the World and World of the Media: A Cross-National Study of the Rankings of the 'Top 10 World Events' from 1988 to 1998," *Gazette* 62(5): 331-353.

[27] Arnett, "Goodbye, World."

[28] Mark D. Alleyne, *International Power and International Communication*, New York: St. Martin's, 1995.

[29] See, for example, William A. Hachten, *The World News Prism: Changing Media of International Communication*, third edition, Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1992; J. Herbert Altschull, *Agents of Power: the media and public policy*, second edition, White Plains, N.Y.: Longman, 1995; and Sean MacBride, chairman of International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, *Many Voices, One World: Communication and Society Today and Tomorrow*, London: UNESCO, 1980.

[30] Hans Donck (1996), "News concerning Africa in Dutch morning papers," *Gazette* 58: 103-116.

[31] Wu, "Systemic Determinants of International News Coverage," 126.

Closely related to the issue of "positive vs. negative" coverage are the types of subjects most likely to garner news coverage. As for which topics make news, researchers have categorized news in various ways. Beaudoin and Thorson identified 19 domains, including such categories as art/entertainment, business, culture, politics/government and social unrest. They found that the most common subjects reported in the Los Angeles Times were politics and government (48 percent), economics (12 percent), crime (11 percent), and military and business (both at 8 percent).[32] Stories about culture accounted for less than 6 percent, which compares to Hess' findings for 1989-1991 that put the percentage of page-one international stories about culture in the *New York Times, Chicago Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times* at 4.6 percent.[33] Also, for comparison, over a four-week period in 1998 the Associated Press was found to have devoted 5.1 percent of its international news coverage to stories about culture.[34]

In addition to the limited range of international news, some scholars fault the prevalence of briefs and the relatively few in-depth, analytical stories appearing in American newspapers.[35] One reason the proportion of thematic vs. episodic stories is important is because of how consumers process the news – what gets their attention and how they learn. Neuman, Just and Crigler have found that episodic reports, which focus on the day's "breaking news," are less meaningful and memorable to newspaper readers than thematic reports, which provide more context and analysis.[36] In a content analysis of the *Los Angeles Times*, Beaudoin and Thorson found that breaking news – what this study terms episodic reports – accounted for 73 percent of the foreign news stories, while feature stories – termed thematic reports here – made up 13 percent. (Fourteen percent of the items were coded as editorial/commentary).[37]

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[32] Christopher E. Beaudoin and Esther Thorson (2001), "Value Representation in Foreign News," *Gazette* 63(6): 486.

[33] Hess, *International News & Foreign Correspondents*, 130.

[34] Beverly Horvit, " How 10 American newspapers and the AP covered the world: A content analysis of June 29, 1998, to July 26, 1998," a paper presented in August 1999 at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference in New Orleans, 15.

[35] Hess, *International News & Foreign Correspondents*, 90-97.

[36] Russell W. Neuman, Marion R. Just and Ann N. Crigler, *Common Knowledge: news and the construction of political meaning*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Few scholars, if any, have specifically examined news coverage of Afghanistan in U.S. newspapers. However, Hess found that Afghanistan accounted for less than 1 percent of CNN's international news coverage from July to December 1992.[38] Another study found that during a four-week period of 1998, only four out of more than 1,200 international AP news items transmitted for morning newspapers had Afghanistan datelines.[39] By comparison, the 10 small to midsize American newspapers published less than one article each from Afghanistan during the same period.[40]

Based on the literature review, one would expect that – absent extensive U.S. involvement, which did not occur until 1998 -- the Taliban would receive little news coverage in the American press because Afghanistan is a developing country. However, what coverage exists likely would consist primarily of episodic coverage of crises, such as combat and natural disasters, and little thematic coverage of such topics as the cultures found in Afghanistan. The purpose of this study is to systematically examine the coverage of the Taliban in an effort to make judgments about how well the U.S. media informed the American public about a part of the world that would later prove to have a great impact on U.S. citizens. Although one cannot easily quantify how much coverage is "enough" and what kind of coverage is "good," one can compare newspapers to observe trends and to make suggestions based on the evidence. To gather the evidence, the following research questions were systematically examined:

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[37] Beaudoin and Thorson, "Value Representation in Foreign News," 486.

[38] Hess, *International News & Foreign Correspondents*, 125.

[39] Horvit, "How 10 American newspapers and the AP covered the world." Although the information on Afghanistan was not used in the paper, the data set was available.

[40] *ibid.* The 10 newspapers in the four-week study were *The Post and Courier* of Charleston, S.C.; the *Providence* (R.I.) *Journal;* the *Richmond* (Va.) *Times-Dispatch; The Journal Gazette* of Fort Wayne, Ind.; the *Reno* (Nev.)

RQ1: How much coverage did the Taliban receive in the five years before Sept. 11, 2001, in five major American newspapers?

RQ2: Which months received the most coverage, and to what events did that coverage correspond?

RQ3: How many news articles per paper were staff-written?

RQ4: Which topics were most and least frequently covered?

RQ5: What proportion of articles was thematic vs. episodic?

RQ6: From where were the stories reported each year?

Methodology

Five U.S. newspapers were randomly selected from the Lexis-Nexis Academic University source list of "major newspapers" because their content was readily available online. In addition, because the newspapers were deemed to be "major" by Lexis-Nexis, they were presumed to have more international news coverage than small daily newspapers. The randomly selected newspapers were *The Boston Globe*, *The Columbus* (Ohio) *Dispatch*, *The* (Ohio) *Plain Dealer*, *The Tampa* (Fla.) *Tribune* and *The Washington Post*. The newspapers have an average daily circulation ranging from 213,032 at *The Tampa Tribune* to 762,009 at *The Washington Post.*[41] Among the five, *The Washington Post* is considered an elite paper that is read by policy-makers[42] and has an influence on other media.[43]

Gazette-Journal; the *Quad-City Times* of Davenport, Iowa; *The Dothan (Ala.) Eagle;* the *Leader-Telegram* of Eau Claire, Wis.; *The News-Gazette* of Champaign-Urbana, Ill.; and the Bremerton, Wash., *Sun*.

[41] "Leading U.S. Daily Newspapers, 2000," 2001 Editor & Publisher International Yearbook, PRIMEDIA Reference Inc.

[42] Cohen, *The Press and Foreign Policy*, and Philip J. Powlick, "The Sources of Public Opinion for American Foreign Policy Officials," *International Studies Quarterly* 39 (4): 427-451.

[43] Werner J. Severin and James W. Tankard Jr., *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods , and Uses in*

The relevant news articles from Sept. 10, 1996, to Sept. 10, 2001, were located through a Lexis-Nexis search of items with the key word "Taliban" and the individual newspaper's name as an additional search term. Because the content analysis was limited to five newspapers, the population of news stories, editorials and op-ed pieces was manageable (N = 320 items), and it was not necessary to take a sample. Items with only a passing reference to the Taliban were excluded.[44] Items that were primarily about Osama bin Laden but mentioned the Taliban were included.

For all items, the variables coded included the date, page, word count and type of article – news/feature story, op-ed column or editorial. The news/feature stories were further coded for their byline, dateline, main subject, whether the story was episodic or thematic, and whether any connection to the United States was mentioned in the story. The subject categories were the same as those used by Hess, although Hess' combat category was expanded to include political violence and acts of terrorism.[45] A single coder analyzed the data. To test the reliability of the coding, an independent coder analyzed a random sample of 10 percent of the items. Across variables, the percentage of agreement between the two coders was 95 percent. The level of agreement for the main subject variable was 83 percent; "a minimal level of 80 percent is usually the standard."[46]

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the Mass Media, New York: Longman, 1992, 224.

[44] In several op-ed columns, for example, writers compared particular U.S. politicians to the Taliban, but their columns were about the Americans, not the Taliban.

[45] Hess, *International News & Foreign Correspondents.*

[46] Riffe, Stephen Lacy and Frederick G. Fico, *Analyzing Media Messages: Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research,* Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998, 51.

Table 1

News Coverage of the Taliban
Sept. 10, 1996, to Sept. 10, 2001*

	1996 (10/10-12/31)	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001** (1/1-10/10)	**Total No. Stories**
Boston Globe	3	0	5	14	7	2	**31**
Columbus Dispatch	1	0	0	0	1	0	**2**
Plain Dealer	11	9	9	12	10	0	**51**
Tampa Tribune	4	3	4	2	0	0	**13**
Washington Post	21	23	57	33	17	30	**181**
Total	40	35	75	61	35	32	**278**

*Editorials and op-ed columns are not included here.

Results

RQ1: How much coverage did the Taliban receive in the five years before Sept. 11, 2001, in five major American newspapers?

Combine, the five newspapers published 320 items related to the Taliban over the five-year period leading up to the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001. As one might have expected, the most extensive coverage appeared in *The Washington Post,* which accounted for 195, or 61 percent, of the total. *The Plain Dealer* published 59 items, compared to 47 items in *The Boston Globe*. According to the Lexis-Nexis analysis, even fewer news items appeared in *The Tampa Tribune* and *Columbus Dispatch.* Over the five-year period, the Tampa newspaper published 13 articles in all, compared with six items – just barely more than one a year – for the *Columbus Dispatch.* In short, readers of those two papers were given very few opportunities to learn about Afghanistan from their newspapers. Of the 320 items published in the five papers, 278 were news stories, 27 were editorials and 15 were op-ed columns.

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Of the 195 items related to the Taliban in *The Washington Post,* the vast majority – nearly 93 percent – were news and feature stories. During the five-year period, *The Post* also ran nine editorials and five op-ed pieces about the Taliban. Interestingly, *The Boston Globe* published more editorials – 10 – on the subject than did *The Post,* but *The Globe* ran far fewer news stories over the five-year period – 31 compared with 181. For its part, *The Plain Dealer* published 51 news stories on the Taliban, four editorials and four columns. In Tampa, editors published 13 news stories but no columns or editorials. And, at the *Columbus Dispatch*, as already mentioned, the editors published about one Taliban-related item a year. In 1996 and 2000, the newspaper ran one news story each year. In 1999 and 2001, the editorial board wrote one editorial on the subject each year -- apparently, the editorial board based its opinions on news published elsewhere. One op-ed piece on Afghanistan was also published in 2001.

Given scholars' concerns about the brief, episodic nature of many news items in U.S. newspapers, the word count for each item was also examined. Again, as expected *The Washington Post* had the highest average word count per news/feature story at 664, and *The Boston Globe's* average was at 663 words per story. For those who might have wanted to learn about the Taliban by reading *The Tampa Tribune*, the average story length was about 100 words, essentially a brief. In fact, none of the 13 news items the *Tribune* published on Afghanistan over five years was more than 200 words long. Interestingly, in his study of international news coverage, Hess excluded all stories less than 150 words.[47] Compared to the other newspapers in the study, *The Washington Post* wrote significantly more about the Taliban. Its total for the 5-year period was 121,994 words, compared with 20,553 for *The Boston Globe* and less than 1,500 words total for either *The Tampa Tribune* and *Columbus Dispatch*.

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[47] Hess (March/April 1996), "Media Mavens," *Society* 33 (3): 70.

RQ2: Which months received the most coverage, and to what events did that coverage correspond?

Two months of the 60-month study received substantially more coverage than the others. In all, the five newspapers published 25 news stories on Afghanistan in October 1996 and 21 stories in September 1998. For the whole time period, the average was about 4.6 stories a month. In October 1996, Afghanistan made headlines because the Taliban successfully entered the capital of Kabul and ousted the government.[48] The news reflected an obvious change in the status quo in Afghanistan, and previous studies have found that such changes can be predictors for international news coverage.[49]

On Oct. 6, Kenneth J. Cooper of *The Washington Post* raised what was to become a common theme in reporting on Afghanistan: the Taliban's human rights record and strict -- Iran's government said "medieval" -- interpretation of Islam.[50] Follow-up stories that month focused on the treatment of women[51] and suspected government forces,[52] and how 250,000 Afghans were streaming out of Kabul.[53] Of course, the ousted government of Afghanistan put up some resistance, which also was reported,[54] as well as some efforts to reclaim power through diplomacy.[55] Interestingly, only three of the 25 news items related to the Taliban published in October 1996 included a reference to the United States.

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[48] Kenneth J. Cooper, "Conquered Afghan City Takes Good With Bad; Harsh Militia Rule Restores Order," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 3, 1996, A1.

[49] Chang et al, "Determinants of International News Coverage."

[50] Cooper, "Kabul Tests Islamic Limits; Stringent New Taliban Rule is Rebuffed Even by Iran," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 6, 1996, A27.

[51] Cooper, "Kabul Women Under Virtual House Arrest; Afghan Radicals Bar Access to Jobs, School," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 7, 1996, A1.

[52] "Afghan Militants Tighten Control; Rulers Deny Claims of Mass Arrests," *The Columbus Dispatch*, Oct. 13, 1996, 3B.

[53] Cooper, "Taliban's Takeover of Kabul Spurs Educated Afghans to Flee," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 8, 1996, A15.

[54] "Old Regime Hits Back in Afghanistan; Reports Say Attacks Leave Taliban Reeling," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 11, 1996, p. A31; "Afghan Islamic Militia Forces Repulsed by Loyalist Troops," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 14, 1996, A22; Cooper, "Peace Elusive for Afghan Capital," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 15, 1996, A11; Cooper, "Taliban's Enemies Attacking On New Front Near Kabul," *The Washington*

The United States also did not appear to be a big factor in the month of the study in which the Taliban received the next most coverage, September 1998. The big news of September 1998 involved heightened tensions between the Taliban and Iran. The crisis began when at least 10 Iranian diplomats were reported missing in Afghanistan the month before, and the crisis began escalating when the Taliban said the diplomats might have been killed.[56] In response, Iran began massing troops and artillery at its northeastern border with Afghanistan.[57] Numerous articles reported the increasingly hostile relations between Iran and the Taliban,[58] as well as efforts to ease those tensions.[59] Most were

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Post, Oct. 16, 1996, A18; "Tanks Rushed Forward," *The Plain Dealer*, Oct. 18, 1996, 16A; "Afghan air base captured," *The Tampa Tribune*, Oct. 20, 1996, 6; Cooper, "Ousted Afghan Forces Retake Base Near Capital; Ex-Government Troops Within 20 Miles of Kabul," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 20, 1996, A24; "Kabul attacked," *The Tampa Tribune*, Oct. 21, 1996, 5; Cooper, "Anti-Taliban Alliance Drives Toward Kabul; Northern Faction Chief Proposes Cease-Fire," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 21, 1996, A14; "Taliban Bomb Village," *The Plain Dealer*, Oct. 25, 1996, 4A; Cooper, "Militia Stalls in Drive to Take Kabul; Taliban Forces Block Ousted Army Chief," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 25, 1996, A28; "Afghan Faction Bombs Taliban's Position," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 27, 1996, A30; "Bombs Fall on Kabul," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 28, 1996, A18.

[55] Cooper, "Taliban, Afghan Faction Chief Meet; Power Broker and Kabul's Captors Urge Broad-Based Central Rule," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 17, 1996, A30; "Warlord Meets Taliban," *The Plain Dealer*, Oct. 17, 1996, 6A; "Talks Called Sham," *The Plain Dealer*, Oct. 20, 1996, A4; and Cooper, "Ousted Defense Minister Agrees to Meet With Taliban Leaders in Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 19, 1996, A26.

[56] "Taliban Says Missing Iranians May Be Dead," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 4, 1998, A34.

[57] Dana Priest, "Iran Poises Its Forces on Afghan Border; Analysts Warn of 'Incursion' Targeting Taliban," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 5, 1998, A1.

[58] Kamran Khan, "Iran Plans Move Against Taliban; Plight of Missing Diplomats Angers Tehran," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 6, 1998, A27; "Iran says it won't confront Taliban," *The Tampa Tribune*, Sept. 7, 1998, 6; "Taliban Says It Will Punish Iranians' Killers," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 11, 1998, A28; "Taliban says envoys killed by its soldiers," *The Plain Dealer*, Sept. 11, 1998, 10A; "Iran Vows Revenge on Afghanistan," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 12, 1998, A22; "Afghans Pound Shiite Faction; Iran Announces War Games," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 13, 1998, A39; "Iran Rebuffed By Taliban on Slain Envoys," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 14, 1998, A14; "Iran Warns Taliban, Pakistan," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 15, 1998, A16; "Iranian leader escalates tension," *The Tampa Tribune*, Sept. 16, 1998, 4; "Thousands Mourn Iranian Diplomats," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 19, 1998, A18.

[59] "Taliban Frees Iranians Seized Last Month," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 20, 1998, A28; and John M. Goshko and Barton Gellman, "Khatemi Asks U.N. to Spur Talks on Afghan Civil War," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 22, 1998, A12; "Clerics warn Iran about going to war," *The Plain Dealer*, Sept. 25, 1998, 6A.

episodic accounts of the days' events, but three *Washington Post* stories were more analytical. In one, Howard Schneider explained some of the complexities involved in the relationship between Iran and the Taliban,[60] while in another, Pamela Constable attempted to explain the Taliban's defiant attitude toward the rest of the world,[61] including the United States and the United Nations. Other stories by Constable offered an in-depth look at what life was like for ordinary Afghans,[62] as well as for women, in particular.[63]

Of the 21 news stories, nine mentioned the United States and 12 did not. In many cases, the United States is mentioned briefly to supply readers some background information. The journalists were reminding readers that a month earlier -- in August 1998 -- the United States had launched cruise missile attacks against suspected terrorist training camps in Afghanistan and that the Taliban had refused to deliver Osama bin Laden to the United States.[64] Another story, written from Washington, analyzed Unocal Corp.'s decision to pull out of a proposed gas pipeline in Afghanistan,[65] while two others discussed U.S. policy-makers' take on the tensions between the Taliban and Iran.[66]

Obviously, the Taliban's connection to the United States became clear to Americans after Sept. 11, 2001, but without such a visceral event, the involvement of the

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[60] Howard Schneider, "Cautious Iran Eyes Neighbor; Tehran Reluctant to Strike Against Afghan Regime," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 26, 1998, A15.
[61] Pamela Constable, "The Taliban vs. the Rest of the World; Afghanistan's Friendless Faction Defiant of Foreign Demands," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 25, 1998, A1.
[62] Constable, "Into the Land of the Taliban; From Kabul to Kandahar, Militia Inspires Devotion -- and Fear," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 27, 1998, A1.
[63] Constable, "Veil of Tears: The Two Faces of the Taliban," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 4, 1998, p. D1.
[64] Schneider, "Cautious Iran Eyes Neighbor"; Constable, "Into the Land of the Taliban" and "The Taliban vs. the Rest of the World"; and Richard Galpin, "Afghans Declare They Won't Give Up U.S. Terror Suspect," *The Plain Dealer*, Sept. 3, 1998, 3A.
[65] Nora Boustany, "No Peace in the Pipeline," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 2, 1998, A26.
[66] Priest, "Iran Poises Its Forces on Afghan Border"; Goshko and Gellman, "Khatemi Asks U.N. to Spur Talks on Afghan Civil War."

United States does not seem to have greatly affected coverage in the five years leading up to the terrorist attack.

RQ3: How many news articles per paper were staff-written?

It's no surprise that only two of the newspapers -- *The Washington Post* and *The Boston Globe* -- had their own correspondents overseas covering the story in Afghanistan. About two-thirds of the *Washington Post's* news items were written by their own correspondents, whether based at the State Department or overseas, compared to about 48 percent of the *Boston Globe's* stories. The two Ohio newspapers each had one staff-written article; both appeared in the newspapers' feature sections. For *The Plain Dealer*, Evelyn Theiss wrote a story detailing what American women could do to help the women of Afghanistan.[67] The article in *The Columbus Dispatch* was written by the newspaper's TV-radio critic, who interviewed Robert Young Pelton, a travel writer specializing in the world's danger spots who was promoting a Travel Channel special on Afghanistan.[68] The article is more of a human-interest piece on Pelton's adventures than an examination of life in Afghanistan.

Interestingly, the intermedia agenda-setting effects of the elite press – *The Washington Post* and *New York Times* – are somewhat apparent in this study. Of the 51 Taliban-related news stories published in *The Plain Dealer*, *New York Times* correspondents wrote six and *Washington Post* reporters wrote four stories.

RQ4: Which topics were most and least frequently covered?

The most frequently reported on topics were diplomacy and combat/political violence, together accounting for nearly 66 percent of all the news coverage. Of the 95 stories related to diplomacy, about 64 percent mentioned the United States. Combat/political violence was the next most-frequent subject, with 88 stories. Given that the Taliban won control of Kabul in September 1996 and was fighting over the next two years before it could claim to occupy 90 percent of Afghanistan,[69] it is not surprising that combat/political violence made up nearly 32 percent of all the news stories. The subject category also included some stories about terrorism, including two hijackings. An Indian jetliner was hijacked Dec. 24, 1999, en route from Katmandu, Nepal, to New Delhi and forced to land in Afghanistan, where they eventually surrendered to Taliban officials.[70] The second hijacking occurred about two months later. An Afghan jetliner was hijacked by a handful of Afghans after it left Kabul on Feb. 6, 2000, and spent a day traveling around Central Asia and Europe before the incident was resolved in England.[71] Some British officials suspected the hijacking was a ploy to obtain asylum in Great Britain.[72]

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[67] Evelyn Theiss, "Group Fighting for Afghan Women's Rights," *The Plain Dealer*, Oct. 26, 1999, 2F.
[68] Tim Feran, "Intrepid Traveler No Stranger to Danger," *The Columbus Dispatch*, April 7, 2000, 8D.

About 11 percent of the news stories during the five-year period focused on human rights, especially the oppression of women. This statistic compares with 4.5 percent for all international-dateline stories in a four-week study of 10 small to midsize American newspapers in 1998[73] and 9.2 percent for the front-page international-dateline stories in the *New York Times, Chicago Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times* from 1989-1991.[74]

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[69] U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Afghanistan."

[70] Constable, "Afghan Hijack Drama Ends Peacefully; Gunmen Free Captives After India Releases Islamic Militants," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 1, 2000, A1.

[71] T.R. Reid and Sharon LaFraniere, "British Officials Negotiate With Afghan Jet Hijackers; 165 Hostages Held After 5-Country Flight," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 7, 2000, A1.

[72] Reid, "Britain Seethes Over Asylum Requests After Hijack Crisis," *The Plain Dealer*, Feb. 11, 2001, 22A.

[73] Horvit, "How 10 American newspapers and the AP covered the world."

[74] Hess, *International News & Foreign Correspondents*, 130.

Of the 31 news stories about human rights in Afghanistan over the five-year period, *The Washington Post* wrote 22. Five were published in *The Plain Dealer*, and *The Boston Globe* ran four stories. That the largest paper in the study devoted a higher percentage of stories to human rights might be expected given the two earlier studies that showed the larger papers giving a higher percentage of their coverage to human rights than the smaller papers.[75] That *The Post's* percentage of human-rights coverage was higher than the overall page-one coverage of the three large newspapers in the Hess study likely reflects the reality that the Taliban received worldwide condemnation for its human-rights violations.[76] In addition, given what many Americans consider to be a high regard for political freedom in the United States, the Taliban's actions greatly deviated from the norms of American society, a factor that Chang et al identified as a predictor of news coverage.[77] In the United States, for example, women are allowed to work, are allowed to attend school, are not forced to be covered from head to toe with only their eyes visible, and are not subjected to beatings for violating a religious code of conduct.

The next most frequently reported on subjects, at nearly 8 percent each, were actions of the domestic government -- the Taliban, albeit though most of the world did not recognize the Taliban as a legitimate government – and the culture or way of life in Afghanistan. The domestic government figure might seem low compared to previous studies, but that likely reflects the fact that many stories related to the Taliban were framed as human-rights stories.

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[75] Hess and Horvit, "How 10 American newspapers and the AP covered the world."

[76] "U.N. investigator criticizes Taliban," *The Tampa Tribune*, Sept. 13, 1999, 4; "Albright decries abuse," *The Tampa Tribune*, Nov. 19, 1997, 8; Thomas W. Lippman, "Albright Chides Afghan Rulers; U.S. Favor Linked to Taliban's Denial of Aid to Terrorists," *The Washington Post*, Aug. 19, 1998, A24; Constable, "Tongue-Lashing the Taliban; Grandmotherly U.N. Official Berates Afghans on Their Treatment of Women," *The Washington Post*, Sept. 20, 2000, A22.

[77] Chang et al, "Determinants of International News Coverage in the U.S. Media."

Of the 21 stories related to culture, however, 17 were published in *The Washington Post.* One appeared in *The Boston Globe*, and three were published in *The Plain Dealer.* No other newspaper in this study showed much interest in the various religious, ethnic or other issues involving life in Afghanistan. For its part, about 9 percent of *The Washington Post's* Taliban-related stories focused on culture -- a higher percentage than what previous research might have suggested. An avid reader of *The Washington Post* could have learned about the longstanding ethnic tensions contributing to factional violence in Afghanistan,[78] how the Taliban's version of Islam differed from that of influential clerics at an Indian seminary,[79] and the Taliban's stated rationale for what others considered human-rights violations. Stories also offered in-depth accounts of life in Afghanistan for women, refugees and others struggling in a poverty-stricken country with a long history of violence.[80] Articles also included information about anti-American sentiment in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as the Taliban's influence on life in a Pakistani town near Afghanistan's border.[81]

Articles in *The Plain Dealer* also detailed how some Afghanis were attempting to circumvent the Taliban's refusal to allow females to receive an education.[82] Another article in *The Plain Dealer* described what it called the only television station in

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[78] Cooper, "Conquered Afghan City Takes Good With Bad."

[79] Cooper, "Afghanistan's Taliban: Going Beyond Its Islamic Upbringing," *The Washington Post,* March 9, 1998, A14.

[80] Constable, "Veil of Tears: The Two Faces of the Taliban" and "Into the Land of the Taliban."

[81] Constable, "Cowed by the Taliban's Spillover: Austere Afghan Faction Brings Fear, and Veils, to Nearby Pakistani Region," *The Washington Post,* Oct. 19, 1998, A14.

[82] Jonathan Steele, "Afghan Girls Find Way Around Taliban Stance on Education," *The Plain Dealer,* April 12, 1998, 8A; and Barry Bearak, "Afghan Woman Fights Her Jihad, Opens School for Girls," *The Plain Dealer,* March 9, 2000, 9A.

Afghanistan – a station that broadcast nightly for three hours in Faizabad, the opposition headquarters.[83]

News stories related to accidents/disasters, crime, business, human interest, immigration and sports were rare, with none of those categories accounting for more than 3 percent of the news. Of course, one would not expect many business or economic stories to be generated from Afghanistan because of the country's high poverty rate. Pamela Constable of *The Washington Post* reported in 1998 that Afghanistan was "sunk in such primitive poverty that the World Bank no longer attempts to measure its economy."[84] A 2000 estimate put the country's Gross Domestic Product per capita at about $800.[85]

RQ5: What proportion of articles was thematic vs. episodic?

Overall, about 29 percent of the news/feature stories were thematic in nature. In other words, these stories provided an in-depth examination of a particular issue. The other 71 percent of the stories focused on breaking-news developments, with some stories providing much more context than others did.

Overall, the percentage of thematic stories was higher than previous studies might have predicted. However, as George Krimsky noted in a discussing another study, it could be that correspondents reporting from the developing world realize that they must work that much harder to make their stories interesting to get them published at all.[86] Simply reporting a breaking-news story might not get one's story in the newspaper.

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[83] Rory McCarthy, "Low-Tech Station Only TV Choice in Afghanistan," *The Plain Dealer*, Nov. 23, 2000, 4E.

[84] Constable, "Into the Land of the Taliban."

[85] Central Intelligence Agency, "Afghanistan" Country Listing, *The World Factbook 2001*, http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/af.html (accessed March 27, 2002).

[86] Krimsky made the comments when talking to the author about findings in research conducted for *Bringing the World Home: Showing Readers Their Global Connections*.

The Washington Post and *Boston Globe* published the highest percentage of clearly thematic news stories at 31 and 42 percent, respectively. If one excludes those two newspapers, only 18 percent of the stories in the other three newspapers were thematic, and *The Tampa Tribune* never supplied its readers more than an episodic account of the day's news.

RQ6: From where were the stories reported each year?

About 47 percent of the Taliban-related stories were reported from Afghanistan, 18 percent from Pakistan and about 16 percent from the United States and United Nations combined. Given the restrictive, oppressive nature of the Taliban, it is not surprising that fewer stories originated from within Afghanistan in 2000 and 2001 as the Taliban tightened its grip on Afghanistan.

Freedom House rated Afghanistan's press as "not free" for all five years of this study.[87] In its May 3, 2001, report, Freedom House noted that the Taliban created some strict new regulations for international journalists in August 2000. "Foreign correspondents continued to attempt to cover Afghanistan, but were frequently treated as spies and arrested," the report states.[88] Although the Committee to Protect Journalists reported that several news agencies maintained bureaus in Kabul in 1999 and 2000, it said the only Western correspondent based in Taliban-held territory was expelled in March 2001.[89]

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[87] Freedom House, "Press Freedom Worldwide," http://freedomhouse.org/pfs99/reports.html (accessed March 27, 2002).

[88] Freedom House, "Country Ratings: Press Freedom Worldwide, May 3, 2001," *Press Freedom Survey 2001.*

[89] Committee to Protect Journalists, "Asia 1999," http://www.cpj.org/attacks99/asia99/Afghanistan.html (accessed March 27, 2002); Committee to Protect Journalists, "Asia 2000," http://www.cpj.org/attacks00/asia00/Afghanistan.html (accessed March 27, 2002); and Committee to Protect Journalists, "Asia 2001," http://www.cpj.org/attacks01/asia01/afghan.html (accessed March 27, 2002).

Conclusions/suggestions for further research

The results of this study do not dramatically differ from what one would have expected based on past research. The Taliban received virtually no coverage in the three of the newspapers in this study of "major" American newspapers for the five years leading up to Sept. 11, 2001. The coverage that did appear focused primarily on combat/political violence and diplomacy -- efforts to resolve the violence. In addition, more than half of the stories related to diplomacy mentioned the United States. Furthermore, in a testament to the power of "normative deviance"[90] to predict news coverage, stories about human rights accounted for more than one out of 10 of the news and feature stories published.

The study also suggests some methodological issues for researchers to consider in future content analyses: the use of datelines vs. key word database searches; the topic domains used; and the episodic vs. thematic designation. Although some studies have used datelines to categorize international news coverage, this study used the power of Lexis-Nexis to locate stories with the key word "Taliban." This method produced more relevant news stories than did using Afghanistan as the key word, but some stories might have been missed. Similarly, previous studies that relied solely on datelines might have "under-reported" the amount of news from Afghanistan -- or other countries, for that matter. More uniformity is needed in future studies.

Similarly, how the stories are categorized by topics can prove highly frustrating. Beaudoin and Thorson used different categories than Hess, for example, and choosing one main topic for a story can be problematic. One difficulty in this study, for example, was determining whether some individual stories should be considered mainly about diplomacy or mainly combat/political violence. Although that might sound nonsensical, many news articles included information about the ongoing violence while also including information about efforts to resolve the conflict. If, however, one codes stories as having multiple subject categories, some statistical analyses are then precluded. Whether the list of topic domains should be expanded or collapsed to enhance the intercoder reliability should be examined.

Finally, more uniformity is needed in how the amount of context in a story is recorded. Designating a story as either "episodic" or "thematic" might be too simplistic, but determining merely whether a story offers "some context" might overstate the degree to which journalists provide their readers important information. A more precise measurement scale needs to be developed.

Regardless of any methodological concerns, however, this study offers a troubling portrait of the quality of international news coverage in the United States' major newspapers. From this researcher's viewpoint, *The Washington Post's* reputation as an elite newspaper is well-deserved. Its coverage of the Taliban before Sept. 11, 2001, was much more extensive, both in terms of quantity and quality, than that of any other newspaper in this study. A devoted reader of *The Washington Post* had nearly 200 opportunities to learn about the Taliban and life in Afghanistan. However, if an individual was not a regular reader of *The Washington Post* -- or even the *Boston Globe* -- one was unlikely to know much about Afghanistan's Islamic regime before the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001.

Certainly, the events of Sept. 11, 2001, caught most Americans, if not the whole world, by surprise, and one cannot argue that more news coverage out of Afghanistan

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[90] Chang et al, "Determinants of International News Coverage in the U.S. Media."

would have prevented the attacks executed that day. However, one wonders if the United States' foreign policy toward the Taliban would have been any different had a wider range of Americans been informed about Afghanistan. Would the United States have done more or less to help the people of Afghanistan? Would Americans have demanded more be done to find Osama bin Laden? These questions are impossible to answer. Nevertheless, it is clear that before Sept. 11, 2001, few Americans would have had the opportunity to learn much about the Taliban that would have allowed them to participate intelligently in any debate. The residents of Columbus, Ohio, received virtually no information about the Taliban; in Tampa, diligent readers would have noticed less than three news stories a year.

Certainly, news editors at papers across the United States could not predict the crisis that was to unfold related to Afghanistan. But their ability -- and the American public's ability -- to predict which parts of the world will affect U.S. interests is weakened further when they fail to even report the news. Every newspaper cannot be a *Washington Post* or *New York Times*. However, newspaper editors can choose their stories more carefully and even offer stories from the elite press to their readers. Newspaper editors also can look for thematic accounts that will be more meaningful to their readers than briefs about violence and politics. They can also work harder to expose their readers to more information from a wider range of countries. If one cannot predict where the United States' interests lie, then one should not let 20 countries dominate 70 percent of a news organization's international report, as one study found.[91]

The findings of this study validate the fears of those media critics worried about international news coverage in U.S. newspapers. "Without permanent staff monitoring events in a country over a long period, the media's ability to anticipate crucial events is severely curtailed," argued John Maxwell Hamilton and George Krimsky.[92] Of course, the Taliban did not make covering Afghanistan easy in 2000 and 2001, but what about 1996 through 1998? Hess echoed that concern when he criticized the U.S. media for only being able to focus on one hot spot at a time. "As news organizations pay extraordinary attention to the top story of the day," he wrote, "they seem to put the other regions of the world on hold -- until they too explode, much to our surprise and apparently to the surprise of the editors, who should have keeping a weather eye on potential storms."[93]

It would be too easy for Hess and others to say, "I told you so." Still, one wonders if the course of history would have been changed if more journalists had been reporting stories like one by Pamela Constable of *The Washington Post* that related anti-American and pro-bin Laden sentiments in Pakistan. She reported the following from a Pakistani man in September 1998:

> America and the West, he said, are the "true terrorists," backing Israel against Palestinians, Bosnia against Muslims, India against Kashmiris. The recent U.S. attack against Osama bin laden, the Saudi expatriate fugitive and Islamic crusader blamed for the bombings of two American embassies in Africa, was "an attack against humanity" and against a hero who gave up the comforts of wealth to join a holy cause.
>
> "We are only responding to this terrorism, but we will use weapons of war, and we are willing to sacrifice it all," the teacher asserted. "Allah teaches that if you really believe, nothing can harm you, not even the United States."[94]

Unfortunately, most Americans were likely unaware of this man's viewpoints and those of thousands like him until after the Sept. 11, 2001, tragedy. More than 20 years ago, Sean MacBride reminded us of the importance of communication to "all social, economic

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[91] Horvit, "How 10 American newspapers and the AP covered the world," 12.
[92] Hamilton and Krimsky, " 'Juju' News from Abroad," 145.
[93] Hess, "Media Mavens," 70.

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and political activity at community, national and international levels" and that "human history becomes more and more a race between communication and catastrophe."[95] That said, it could not hurt for news organizations to follow the advice of Beaudoin and Thorson and follow the lead of The Washington Post to "pay greater attention to values and culture if they intend to provide their diverse audiences with a comprehensive view of the world today."[96] Before Sept. 11, 2001, at least three of the newspapers in this study failed their readers.

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[94] Constable, "Veil of Tears."

[95] MacBride, p. xvii.

[96] Beaudoin and Thorson, "Value Representation in Foreign News," 501.

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